Bypaths in Dixie

Sarah Johnson Cocke

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BYPATHS IN DIXIE

"DES LIKE SHE RUB 'IN ON YORN."

BYPATHS IN DIXIE

FOLK TALES OF THE SOUTH

BY

SARAH JOHNSON COCKE

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

HARRY STILLWELL EDWARDS

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TO MY HUSBAND

INTRODUCTION

When Thomas Nelson Page began his stories of the old South in the early "Eighties," the reading people of America suddenly aroused to the realization that a vein of virgin gold had been uncovered. There was a rush to the new field and almost every Southerner who had a story to tell told it, many of them with astonishing dramatic force and power. As by magic a new department was added to American literature and a score of new writers won their way to fame. From a notably backward section, in point of

expression, the South stepped easily, with the short story, into the front rank and has held her place ever since. The field once entered was explored faithfully, the eager minds of her sons and daughters running through the Ante-Bellum, Revolutionary and Colonial eras, and when Joel Chandler Harris developed the "Brer Rabbit" stories, "The Little Boy" and "Uncle Remus," it seemed as though future work must lie in refining for the ore was all in sight.

But there was one lead almost entirely forgotten or undervalued in the scramble for literary wealth and this lead was into the Southern nursery where the real black Mammy reigned. With the better lights before us now we realize the astonishing fact that the very heart center of the Southern civilization had not been touched.

INTRODUCTION

Mrs. Cocke in the charming stories contained in this volume is the happy preemptor of the new find. Every Southerner old enough will recognize the absolute truthfulness of the scenes and methods therein embalmed, and applaud the faithfulness with which she has reproduced that difficult potency, the gentle, tender, playful, elusive, young-old, child-wise mind of the African nurse in the white family; the mind to which all things appeal as living forces and all lives as speaking intelligences.

The naturally developed mind of the African slave had no leaning to violence. The influence of the wildness of nature, the monotones of forests, fields and running waters, the play of shadows and the wind voices lingered in it and the tendency to endow all life surrounding it with human or

god-like powers was as strong in an humbler way as with the early Greek. But the Greeks were warriors; the African slave tribes, never. Where one worshipped force, the other bowed to shrewdness and cunning and by these lived within a hostile environment. The rabbit that survives and multiplies was to the African slave always mightier than the lion that fell to the hunter's gun or spear, and the rabbit was and, to a large degree still is, the best personification of the negro mind in its method of approach and treatment. Brer Rabbit in the stories retold by Harris is really the child-wise, world-old mind of Uncle Remus, himself a type. The absence from them of some of the moral laws is in itself one proof of faithful reproduction.

But in the nursery we had by necessity the

moral laws grafted on the African mind by master and mistress through daily association and the singular application of these is within the memory of many grown-up Southern children. I take issue with those who declare that the black Mammy did have equal authority in the punishment of refractory children. I have never known an instance in which punishment by her was inflicted in blows. A child might be dragged forcibly to its nursery, restrained by a turned key or remorselessly carried away to solitude, in arms, but struck, never! Blows were unnecessary with the wise-old Mammy. There were the cupboard and pantry, the fruit orchard, the kitchen stove, and there were the birds, beasts and fowls to be invoked in song and story. Thus were the children restrained, guided and taught, and doubtless

many a flower in our literary gardens to-day is but an old-time seed matured. This is the best side of the picture. The seed was not always well chosen; the impression, a good one. All black Mammies were not good and superstitions fertilized with fear were often sown in childish minds never to be eradicated. The writer to this day could not under any temptation bring himself to touch a spider or sleep in the dark and somehow feels that life will not be entirely complete without a chance to even up with the female Senegambian who filled his mind with weird stories Saturday nights and prepared him for religious service Sunday mornings.

Mrs. Cocke's work speaks for itself. It is a difficult work presented with but few of the stage accessories. But I believe it is admirably done and will endure in a niche of

its own. Certain it is that those to whose memories it appeals will receive it gratefully.

HARRY STILLWELL EDWARDS.

Macon, Ga.,
April 10, 1911.

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The ROOSTER
Telephone

BYPATHS IN DIXIE

I

THE ROOSTER TELEPHONE

The telephone had just been mended again, and the man suggested as he left that the little boy find another plaything. Phyllis indignantly protested that Willis had done no damage to the instrument, and that the frequent defects were due to the failure of the workman to put it in proper condition. Being thus defended by so strong an ally, Willis lost no time in attacking the forbidden object as soon as the door was closed.

"Let de ole telerfome erlone, baby," said

Phyllis in a tone of sympathetic protest. But the boy could not resist such an opportunity. "Dat table tiltin' right now." She caught her breath as the table righted itself. "An' dat telerfom'll bus' yo' haid wide op'n."

"I'm going to talk to my papa."

"You gwinter talk ter er bust'd haid, dat's who you—" At that moment, table, telephone, boy and all fell to the floor with a bang. "What'd I tell yer?"

Willis answered with a succession of screams that admitted of no argument or consolation. Phyllis offered none until she had satisfied herself that a bumped head and a much frightened little boy were the extent of the damage.

"Mammy gwine whup dat telerfome," she continued, "an' de flo' too, caze dey hu't her

baby." And she proceeded to execute the threat.

"Don't whip the telephone—whip the table!" he screamed.

"Dat's right," striking the table with a towel; " 'twas dat ole table done all de mischuf—Mammy gwina rub camfer on dat telerfome's haid des like she rub'in on yorn, an' beg his pard'n too," looking for the raised place. "Come on ov'r ter de wind'r so Mammy kin see her baby's haid good!"

"I don't want you to see it good!" And the wails redoubled.

"Lawsee! Look at dat ole rooster in de yard!" half dragging the little fellow to the window; "he's done gone an' telerfome ter Miss Churchill's rooster 'bout you holl'rin' an' kicken' up so!"

"No, he shan't!" blubbered Willis.

"He done done it, an' he fixin' ter do hit ergin!"

Another crow from the rooster: "I tole yer so! heah 'im? An' Miss Churchill's rooster done telerfome ov'r ter Miss Coxe's roost'r, an' dey keeps on telerfomin' ter de nex' yard tell all de roost'rs in dis whole place'll know you settin' up hyah cryin' an' yellin' like you wus Ma'y Van."

"I don't want 'em to tell," said the little boy, burying his face on her shoulder.

"I doan speck yer does, but he done tole hit!" A fresh burst followed, which Phyllis strove to quiet. "Hyah, eat dis nice butt'r'd biskit Mammy bin savin' fur yer." Willis pushed the bread away. She coaxed, "I speck ef you eats er lit'le, an' thows er lit'le out yond'r ter ole man Roost'r, he'll git in er good humor (like all de men fokes does

whin dey eats), an' he'll telerfome ter Miss Churchill's roost'r dat he jes foolin' him, an' Miss Churchill's roost'r'll keep de wurd passin' erlong dat way tell all de roost'rs'll know our ole Shanghi jes pass er joke off on you."

"Where's his telephone?" sniffled the boy, only partly diverted by the chicken pecking up the crumbs of bread.

"He keep hit in his th'oat whar de Lawd put hit."

"How can he eat?" Willis turned from the window to gaze into the old woman's face.

"Pshaw, boy, you think er stool an' er table wid er telerfome on hit's in dat roost'r's th'oat?" and she laughed aloud. Moistening the handkerchief again with camphor, she parted the curls and tenderly pressed the

cloth to the bumped place. "Nor suhree! dey ain' no sich er thing in dat roost'r's th'oat. Mist'r Man put dat un in hyar fur yo' ma," pointing in the direction of the 'phone, "but de Lawd hook up dat un out yond'r in ole man Roost'r's th'oat. Yas, Lawd! He put hit in dar fur Roost'rs ter talk wid an' fur fokes ter lis'n ter whut dey talks. You 'member de uth'r night when you wus took sick in de night, an' Mammy keep er tellin' yer ter stop cryin' 'bout de cast'r oil, an' lis'n ter de roost'rs crowin'? Well, our ole roost'r wus jes gittin' news fum Peter's roost'r den."

"Who's Peter?" Willis shook the camphor cloth from his head. "Who's Peter, Mammy?" he insisted.

"Lemme see how I kin 'splain ter yer who Peter is," scratching her head under the

bandana. "Lemme see—Peter wus er gent'-mun de scriptur speak erbout dat trip hissef up on de 'Bridge er Trufe' an' fell er sprawlin' flat; an' de Lawd sont er roost'r 'long 'bout dat time ter pick 'im up. Cose you know de roost'r didn't pick 'im up wid his foots, but he raise him up wid er speeret de Lawd put in 'im fur dat 'speshul 'casion. Oh, I tell yer, de Lawd talks er heap er talk ter fokes thu fowels an' beastes, but nobody doan take no notice uv 'em; dey 'pears ter fergit how dat fowel hope Peter up, an' pint'd de road ter Glory fer 'im."

"Mammy, can roosters talk show nuf?"

"Roosters kin talk good es you kin,—hits jes fokes ain' got nuf speeret in 'em ter heah whut dey says. Way back yonder time whin hants an' bible fokes projeck' wid one nuth'r, beastes an' speerets confabs wid

fokes, jes like me an' you talkin' now! Yas, suh, an' fokes lis'ns ter de confab dem sorter creeters talks too! Whar you speck ole man Balim wud er bin terday ef hit hadn't er bin fur dat mule er his'n? But screech owels an' jay birds an' er heap mo' 'sides chicken roosters is got speerets in 'em in dese days too. Some fokes calls 'em hants!"

The door opened and little Mary Van, who had caught the last word, tripped quickly to the old woman's side and whispered in suppressed excitement: "Where's the hants, Mammy Phyllis?"

"Nem'ine whar de hants is terday. I'm talkin' 'bout de rooster telerfome. Yer see Peter's rooster's settin' up in rooster heb'n keepin' his eye out fur all de news. He nuv'r do go ter sleep reg'lar; sometime at

night he sorter nod er lit'le, but he nuv'r do git in bed, caze he feer'd Mist'r Sun wake up 'fo' he do. Well, whin he heah ole man Sun gap loud, an' turn hisself ov'r an' scratch, he know he fixin' ter git up, an' dat minit he flap his wings an' telerfome loud es he kin 'de break er day is c-o-m-i-n' ' (imitating the rooster). Ole man Diminicker down yonder on yo' gran'pa's rice plantation, down on de aige er de oshun, is de fus ter git de news. He stir hissef erbout an' flop his wings, an' telerfome loud es he kin, 'de break er day is c-o-m-i-n'.' De rooster on de nex' plantation gits de wurd an' dey passes hit on tell our ole rooster gits hit way up hyah in de mountains. Den our ole Shanghi keeps de wurd er gwine, tell ev'ry chickin fum one side de country ter de uth'r knows day fixin' ter break."

"Mammy, Mister Rooster wants some more biscuit."

"I 'speck he do; did yer ev'r know er man dat wus satisfied wid what wus give him? Yas, Lawd! dat rooster'll stan' dar an' peck vit'als long es you thows hit ter 'im, eb'n whin he feel hissef bustin' wide op'n; he'll stretch his neck ter git one mo' bite whilst he's dyin'."

"Who's dyin?"

"Nobody ain't dyin', caze dat rooster ain' gwina git ernuf fum me an' you ter do him no harm."

"Make him telephone again."

"Nor, he say he want ter pass er lit'le conversation wid Sis Hen, an' Miss Pullet, an' tell 'em, mebbe ef dey scratch hard ernuf, dey'll fine some crum's er his but'r'd biskit."

"Why didn't Mister Rooster save 'em some?"

"Who, dat rooster?" Phyllis shook her head. "Dem wimmen hens doan git nuthin' but whut dey scratches fur," then thoughtfully she added: "Cose all roosters ain' 'zackly erlike. Dey's er few, but recoleck I says er pow'ful few, dat saves mos' ev'ything fur de hens an' chickens; den der's some uv 'em dat saves right smart fur 'em; den der's er heap uv 'em dat leaves 'em de crum's, but de res' er de rooster men fokes doan leave 'em nuthin', an' de po' things hatt'r scratch fur der sefs."

"Less give Sis Hen and Miss Pullet some biscuit too," Mary Van insisted.

"You think Willis's pa got ter feed all de po' scratchin' hens in dis worl'?—well, he ain't."

"Give 'em this piece. It hasn't got any butter on it." Willis handed her the bread.

"Lawsee," she threw up the disengaged hand and brought it down softly on the little boy's head, "but ain't you 'zackly like all de uth'r roosters—an' hens too fur dat matt'r—willin' ter give 'em dat ole crus' atter you done eat all de sof' but'r'd insides out'n it!"

A lusty crow sounded from the rooster in the yard.

"Mammy, what did Mister Rooster say?"

"He say 'dey's er good little boy in h-y-a-h,' " trilled Phyllis, imitating the rooster's crow.

Willis smiled while his hands unconsciously clapped applause. Slipping from her lap, he ran about the room flapping his arms and crowing: "There's a good little

boy in h-e-r-e, there's er good little boy in h-e-r-e."

Mary Van started in the opposite direction: "There's a good little girl in h-e-r-e."

"Hush, Mary Van," commanded Willis; "you can't crow, you've got to cackle."

"I haven't neether; I can crow just as good as you. Can't I, Mammy Phyllis?"

"Well," solemnly answered Phyllis, "it soun' mo' ladylike ter heah er hen cackle dan ter crow, but dem wimmen hens whut wants ter heah dersefs crow is got de right ter do it," shaking her head in resignation but disapproval, "but I allus notice dat de roosters keeps mo' comp'ny wid hens whut cackles, dan dem whut crows. G'long now an' cackle like er nice lit'le hen."

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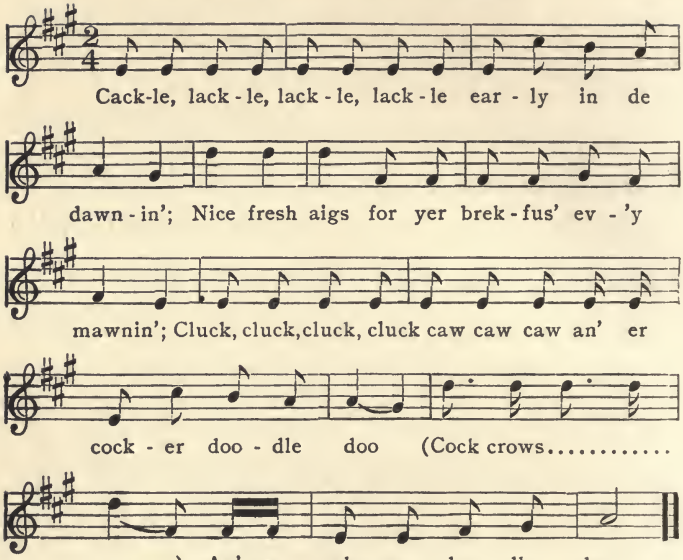


II

OLD MAN GULLY'S HANT

OLD MAN GULLY'S HANT

"Put some bread crumbs on top of the barrel, Willis, and less see if he can peck it off," suggested Mary Van in baby treble.

The Langshan seemed to understand, for he watched Willis with interest as he crumbled the bread; and after due consideration, and with an almost human scorn towards the hens, measured his steps to the barrel, and stretching his long neck, removed every crumb from the top. After this he slowly raised one foot as though to return to the company of hens, but changing his mind, stood with the foot poised in air and one eye apparently fixed upon Phyllis.

"Come on, chillun, I ain' gwine stay hyah an' let dat ole chicken conjur me."

"I don't want to go, Mammy, I want to stay and feed the chickens," protested Willis.

"I want to see him eat off the barrel some more," pleaded Mary Van.

"Dat rooster ain't no chicken, I tell yer, 'tain' nuthin' in dis worl' but er hant."

This closed the argument, for they felt the mysterious influence of "hants" that was upon Phyllis, hence they followed like the meekest of lambs until she stopped at her own room in the yard. After stirring some embers to a flickering sort of blaze, she looked insinuatingly about her and broke into an excited whisper: "Whinsomev'r yer sees enything right shiny black, widout er single white speck on hit nowhar, you

kin jes put hit down in yo' mine, *dat's er hant!* 'Tain' no use ter argufy erbout it; dem's de creeturs dat speerets rides whin dey comes back ter dis worl'. An' 'twas one er dem same black, biggity Langshans dat ole man Gully's hant come back inter." Phyllis had taken her seat by this time, and the children had scrambled into her lap. "Sakes erlive! You all mos' claw me ter death. How yer 'speck erbody ter be hol'in' two growd up fokes like youall is?" But the children continued to climb, one on each knee. Phyllis put out her foot and dragged a chair in front of her. "Hyah stretch yer foots out on de cheer, an' mebby ef yer sets still, I kin make out ter hole yer."

"Mammy, where do hants stay?" asked Willis.

"Hants is ev'r whars," she looked about

her; "dis hyah room right full uv 'em now."

Mary Van's head was immediately buried on the old woman's shoulder, while Willis's arms locked tightly around her neck.

"Yas," she continued, in low mysterious tones, "dis whole wurl's pack'd full uv 'em, but 'tain' no use ter git skeer'd, long es dey ain' got no bisnes' wid you. De time ter git skeer'd is whin *you sees 'em!*" (A scream from Mary Van answered by a tremor from Willis.) "Some fokes doan git skeer'd den, kaze dey knows 'tain' no use ter git skeer'd er good speerets—hit's jes dese bad hants dat does de damage."

"Tell us about a good, good spirit, Mammy," came in muffled tones from Mary Van.

"Cause we don't want to hear about bad old hants," finished Willis.

"How yer speck me ter tell yer enything wid you chokin' me, an' Ma'y Van standin' on her haid on m' should'r. Set up like fokes—you hole dis han' an' let Ma'y Van hole dis un, an' I'll tell yer 'bout old man Gully's hant."

"Ole man Gully wus de biggites' creetur' you ev'r seed; he jes nachilly so biggity he 'fuse ter do er lick er wurk. Plantin' time er harves' time ain' make no diffunce ter ole man Gully. He set up on his front po'ch an' smoke his pipe, an' read de newspaper an' eat same es one dese ole buckshire hogs, whilst his old lady, an' de chilluns, an' der ole nigg'r Abe, done all de wurk.

"Ole Miss Gully wus pow'ful sot on de ole man; she think he's de mos' pow'fules' gran' man in de wurl. Ef he say 'I wants er chaw er 'bark'r, de ole lady'd break her

neck runnin' ter de fiel' ter tell Abe ter take de mule out'n de plow an' fly ter town fur de 'bark'r. Den she'd git de old broke down steer an' go ter plowin' tell Abe come back. All dis time ole man Gully snoozin' on de po'ch in de cool. Ef er rainy spell come an' spile de wheat, er ef fros' come an' kill de fruit, ole man Gully 'buse de ole lady an' de chilluns, an' say ef dey had er done like he tole 'em hit nuv'r wud er hap'n'd.

"One day long 'bout de mid'le er de sum'r, Mist'r Gully say he bleeg ter have some possum vit'als. Cose nobody doan eat no possum dat time de ye'r, an' 'taint' no time ter hunt 'em nuthe'r, but ole man Gully says, 'I wants de possum,' an' dat wus 'nuf fur de Gullys. Abe an' de chillun stops all de wurk on de farm an' go possum huntin'. Dey hunts all day, an' dey hunts all night

'fo' dey so much es come 'crost er single possum track. Bimeby, att'r day had mos' give out, hyah come er big lean, lank ole possum up er 'simmon tree full er green 'simmons. Dey runs home quick an' giv' hit ter dey ma, an' Lawsee! by de time dat possum an' tat'rs 'gun ter cookin' up good, de smell uv hit jes nachally make Abe an' dem chilluns mouf dribble tell dey can' do er lick er wurk fur standin' 'roun' de kitchen smellin' dat possum. Miss Gully had er plenty er fat meat an' sop fur de chillun, but dat big deesh er possum an' tat'rs at de haid er de table done steal all der appertite, an' dey wus settin' dar turnin' ov'r in der mines which one gwine git de bigges' piece.

"Pres'ntly Mist'r Gully sorter cla'r his thoat an' push his plate erway an' pull de deesh closter ter 'im an' cas' er eye 'roun'

de table sorter mad like, an', honey, dem chillun know right den an' dar dat dey got ter eat fat meat an' sop fur sup'r, er dee doan git no sup'r. De bigges' boy sorter wipe his eyes er lit'le, an' de nex' two chillun, dey out an' sniffle. De ole lady twis' her mouf like she tryin' ter say 'doan spile yo' pa's sup'r.' An' de ole man make out he ain' heah nuthin' nur see nuthin'. Pres'ntly he look up wid his mouf right full er tat'rs an' possum an' see de chillun's eyes feas'in' on 'im, an' der moufs wurkin' like his'n, an' he feel sorter 'shame. He swaller hard he do, like he's fixin' ter give 'em some, den he change his mine an' say, 'G'long in de yard, chillun,—Pappy's sick, let Pappy eat de possum.' "

"Make Mister Gully give them some, Mammy," said Willis indignantly.

"He hatt'r go back like Niggerdemus an' be born'd ergin ef he do. Nor suhree, he eat up ev'y speck er dat possum, an' he sop up ev'y drap er dat gravy too; den he stretch hissef an' say he 'speck he'll g'long ter bed an' try ter git er good night's res'. Den all de fambly hatt'r g'long ter baid too, so de old man kin git ter sleep. Bimeby, long' 'bout time de moon sot, hyah come sump'in' nuth'r knockin'—knockin'—knockin', on de wind'r blines.

" 'Who dat?' sez ole lady Gully.

"Sumpin' nuth'r keep er knockin' an' er knockin'. Bimeby de old dog 'gun ter howlin', an' de chickens 'gun ter crowin', an' de pigs 'gun ter squealin', an' de kitchin do' blow'd wide op'n, an' de sumpin' nuth'r come tippitty, tippitty, tip, 'long up de hall.

" 'Who dat?' sez ole lady Gully ergin.

"De sump'in' nuth'r keep er comin' tippitty, tippitty, tip, right 'crost de ole lady's foots on de baid. She holl'r an' squall fur de ole man an' de chillun' ter come kill hit. De chillun an' Abe come er runnin' but de ole man ain' stirry er speck.

" 'Lawsee mussy! Light de candle quick,' sez she.

"An' whut 'twus you 'speck dem chillun foun'?"

"What, Mammy?" came in a chorus.

"Er big ole Langshan rooster, jes like dat varmint out yond'r. Yas suh, dar hit sot on de foot er de baid, quoilin' an' grumblin' like fokes. De ole lady tell Abe ter run Langshan out 'fo' he wake up de ole man, but Lawd er mussy! Abe 'gun ter howlin': 'Oh! my Lawd, Marst'rs daid! Marst'rs

daid! an' dis hyahs his hant!' Sho' nuff de ole man wus layin' dar stiff an' stark daid!"

"Is Papa's rooster old man Gully, Mammy?" whispered Willis.

"Hit mout not be dis same ole man Gully, son, but hit's some ole man Gully, sho' es you born. Well, de ole lady she 'gun ter moanin' an' takin' on tur'bl', she did, an' de Langshan he settin' up cluckin' an' quoilin' tell nobody can' heah der own ye'rs. Dey darsn't ter drive 'im out—nor suh, eb'n de und'r tak'r skeerd ter do dat, so 'tain't long 'fo' dat ole Langshan chick'n boss ev'ythin' on de farm. Yas suh, I tell yer, Abe an' dat ole 'oman act scand'lous ter dat chickin. De ole lady, she love hit, but Abe, he jes nachelly skeer'd er de hant. Dey nuv'r raise sich er crap b'fo', 'caze dat rooster scratchin' all ov'r de fiel', an' Abe

say he know whut you doin' wheth'r he lookin' at yer er not.

"Ev'y time Langshan 'ud speak sof' ter de hens, Miss Gully'd holl'r ter Abe, 'Yer marst'r want some fresh wat'r, run quick.' Whinsomev'r Langshan'd crow, she run an' git him mo' vit'als. Oh, I tell yer dem dominicker hens whut kep' comp'ny wid him sholy got fat an' lazy eatin' all day an' doin' nuthin' but cacklin' conversation wid him. An' dey's er heap er fokes in dis town too, dat doan do no mo' dan dem hens does."

"Did the children call Langshan papa?" interrupted Willis.

"Nor, darlin', dem boys doan b'leef in hants, an' dey tell dey ma dat de rooster jes foolin' her, but she crack 'em crost de haid wid de broom stick, an' dey darsn't say so no mo'.

"Long 'bout Chris'mus time Miss Gully wus took down wid de rumatiz. She can't lif' er finger, let lone git up, so she tell Abe ter bring de ole man up in de house. Yas suh, dat rooster strut hissef all ov'r dat house. He peck at hissef in de lookin' glass, an' he light up on de pianny in de parler; he fly up on de baid an' peck Miss Gully's nose, an' she tell Abe de ole Man's lovin' her. Hit sho' wus cur'us 'bout dat rooster, caze ev'y time de doct'r come, he hop up on de foot er de baid an' cluck, an' cluck tell de doct'r git up an' go. One day de doct'r tell Miss Gully she gwine die. She sorter cry 'bout hit er spell, den she sont fur de ole man's hant. Abe he go an' shoo de roost'r in de room, but he can't make him fly on de baid. Abe he tiptoe an' wave his han's sof' like b'hime him, but de rooster

run und'r de baid an' cackle, an' cluck, an' make so much fuss dat de boys wanter run him out, but Miss Gully say he talkin' ter her. She answer back ter him, 'Yas, suh, —dat's right,—yas, suh, I'm gwine do jes like you says.' She keep er gwine on dat erway er long time, tell bimeby she tell Abe ter go git lawyer Clark ter make her er will. She say de ole man say she got ter give him all de money, dat de chillun'll spen' hit ef she don't. De lawyer argufy wid her 'bout doin' sich er trick es dat, but he thowin' 'way his bref, caze by de time he git thu' wid dat speech, Miss Gully wus done daid."

The children took a long breath. "Did the hant kill her, Mammy?"

"Hit conjur her so she dunno whut she doin', jes like dat ole chickin try ter do me."

"DAT OLE ROOST'R SQUATTIN' UND'R DE BAID AIN' NUV'R TAK'N HIS EYES OFF 'N ABE."

"Did the children cry when their mama died?" came tremulously from Mary Van.

"Dey car'ied on right sharply, caze she wus er good ole 'ooman 'fo' she got conjured, an' she wus jes doin' what she think wus right den; but der cryin' wusn't nuthin' ter dat nigg'r Abe howlin' an' moanin' ov'r in de cornd'r. Yer see dat ole roost'r squattin' und'r de baid ain' nuv'r tak'n his eyes off'n Abe, an' Abe want 'im ter g'long an' keep comp'ny wid somebody else sides him. So he holler', 'Mistis, fur de Lawd's sake make Marst'r g'long wid yer.' Den de ole rooster start ter cluckin' an' fussin', an' hit 'pear dat he fixin' ter go to'ards Abe. Abe he start ter hol'rin': 'Nor suh, nor suh, I doan want yer ter g'way fum hyah! I wants Mistis ter come back in one dese big Langshan hens, so you won't git so lonesome,

dat's whut I wants.' De rooster keep on er cacklin' an' er fixin' ter fly out'n de wind'r, but Abe think he gwine jump on him, an' he yell, 'Please suh, doan hu't Abe, Marster, caze whin I dies, I'm gwine come back in one dese fine gooses, an' wait on yer plum tell jedgement.' "

"Did old Langshan get all the money, Mammy?" the financial side appealing to Willis.

"He git much uv hit es hit take ter buy pizen ter make er conjur pill ter kill him wid."

"Can you kill a hant?" he asked incredulously.

"Yer can't kill 'em 'zackly, but yer kin run 'em inter sum uth'r creet'r, dat is ef de conjur pill wurk."

"Mammy," began both children at once.

"Hole on,—jes one ax at er time—let de lady have de fus time, caze you'se Mammy's man. Now den, ax yer sayso, Ma'y Van."

"Did Miss Gully turn to a hen?"

"She done bin eat up long ergo ef she did," then turning to Willis, "Whut's Mammy's man got ter ax?"

"I want to know how Abe turned to a goose."

"Abe didn't hatt'r turn ter no goose ertall, caze de Lawd done alreddy born'd him er goose.—Come on now, an' less play in de yard."

III

JACK O' LANTERN AND THE GLOW WORM

JACK O' LANTERN AND THE GLOW WORM

"Mammy, you cut m' Jack-my-Lantern for me." Willis was struggling to carve features in a huge pumpkin.

"I tole yer ter let Zeek make dat foolish lookin' thing," grumbled Phyllis, faithfully striving however to cut the pumpkin according to Willis's instructions.

"Make Mary Van one too," he demanded.

"I got one," and Mary Van blew into the kitchen door with a gust of chilly wind, "and Papa's made a pretty one for you too, Willis—ain't you glad?"

"Whut you all think dem Jacky-Lanterns

is enyhow?" Phyllis asked with an air of mystery.

"They are—" Willis hesitated, "they are —funny pretties," he finished.

"Dey ain' nuthin' funny 'bout er show nuff Jack-my-Lantern, I kin tell yer dat fur sartin an' sho!" Her face assumed a grave expression, "and—take keer, boy, Kitty'll spill hot greese on yer," making a dive at Willis in time to save the cook from stumbling. "Come on out er dis hyah kitchen,— 'tain' no place fur chillun no how."

"Mammy, less go over to Mary Van's and get m' Jack-my-Lantern," coaxed Willis, as Phyllis directed the way toward the nursery.

"Nor, yer doan need hit tell dark. Jack-my-Lanterns doan come out 'cep'in' at night. Leastways fokes doan see em."

"Jack-my-Lanterns ain't anything but big

old pumpkins, are they, Mammy Phyllis?" Mary Van asked to reassure herself.

"Dat dey is," the old nurse's expression grew fearful and cunning. "Dey's de wuss sorter hants—dat's whut dey is."

This ended the contention of going to Mary Van's.

"You memb'rs," she began after an ominous silence, "ole man Gully's hant, doan yer?"

"Old Langshan rooster, Mammy?" Willis whispered.

"Dat's de ve'y hant—yas suh—ole lady Gully ain't skeercely in her grave 'fo' dat rooster hant start ter gwine down in de cellar—an' peckin' 'roun' like he huntin' fur sumthin'.

"Abe tell de boys he seen de ole man take er bag er gole down dar onct, an' he 'speck

old Langshan know whar he berry hit—but howsumev'r dat is—one thing wus sho'—dat rooster peck in one cornder er dat celler, tell dem boys pis'n him."

The children moved closer to Phyllis. "Mammy, did he come back in another rooster?"

"No, ma'm, he didn't,—he say he nuv'r speck ter come back in no mo' creeturs ter git pis'n'd ergin. 'De nex' time I comes back,' sez he, 'hit's gwine be in sumthin' nuth'r fokes can't projick none er der dev'ment wid.' Ahah,—an' yer knows whut dat is, doan yer?"

Both little heads shook a trembling negative.

"Well, hit's er Jack-my-lantern!" said Phyllis, and at her solemn statement the children looked aghast.

"HEP! HEP! — SOMEBODY COME HOPE ME!"

"Yas, ma'm,—an yas, suh," she bowed to each in turn, "he come back straight es he kin float hissef ter de swamp down yond'r on yo' granpa's rice plantation." She waited for this to be entirely absorbed by her eager little listeners, then added: "I seen 'em m'sef winkin', an' blinkin' all erbout dar," suiting facial contortions to her words.

"One day Miss Gully's bigges' boy went down in de cell'r ter git some tat'rs fur dinn'r, an' fus' thing yer know he start ter yellin' 'Hep! hep!—Somebody come hope me!'

"Abe an' de uth'r boys wint down dar, an' seed de boy layin' flat on de floo' whar de hant thow'd him—"

"Mammy, lemme get in your lap," begged Mary Van, while Willis jumped on one of

her knees. Mary Van followed suit, and before Phyllis could reply they had cuddled upon her, almost taking her breath.

"Sakes erlive! you all gittin' 'way wid me wusser'n dem hants done de Gully boys."

"Go on, Mammy," they both urged.

"Well, Abe an' de uth'r two boys fotch him up sta'rs an' lay him on his ma's baid. Dey lef' him er minute ter go git some cam'fer, an' when dey come back, dar sot er crow on de haid er de baid tellin' de boy:

> " 'Go foll'r de light,
> Don' feer ter fight,
> An' yer'll git er bag er gole!'

"He git up, he do, an' go out de do', but hit's s' dark he tell de crow he can't see how ter git erlong. Jes den Jacky-Lantern flash up an' say:

" 'Foll'r me, sonny,
I got de money.'

"De boy run up ter de light, but hit go out jes es he git clost up ter hit. He say: 'Hole on dar, whar yer takin' me?' Jacky-Lantern say·

" 'Foll'r me, sonny,
I got de money.'

"Johnny Squinch Owel fly b'fo' him an' say:

" 'Unch-oo, unch-oo,
Doanchu go, doanchu go!'

"Boy tell him, 'Git out'n m' way, Johnny, I'm atter money—I ain' got no time ter talk ter you.'

"Johnny, he keep er foll'rin' de boy an' holl'r:

" 'Unch-oo, unch-oo,
Doanchu go, doanchu go.'

"Jacky-Lantern light up ergin, an' de boy start up runnin'. 'I'll git yer dis time,' he say; but Jacky-Lantern drap down in de groun' ev'y time he git enywhars near 'bouts him, an' Willie Wisp pop up way ov'r de uth'r side."

"Who was Willie Wisp, Mammy?"

"He wus er nuth'r hant dat tak'n up wid ole man Gully. When de boy see Jacky-Lantern pop up hyah, an' Willie Wisp pop up dar,—he jump fus' dis erway, an' dat erway tell—"

"What was the boy's name?" asked Willis.

"Lemme see, I b'leef dat boy name Jack."

"No, Mammy, Jacky-Lantern's name, Jack," Willis reminded her.

"Dat's so." She dropped her head on one side: "Dat Gully boy's name, Bill—Bill Gully's his name. Dem uth'r two boys an'

Abe takes atter Bill an' holl'r ter him ter let dem hants erlone, but Bill tell 'em ter 'ten' ter der own biznes, dat he atter gole.

"Dey holl'r back, 'Dey's er plenty er gole in de cell'r—come on back an' hope dig hit out.'

" 'I doan want no lit'le gole you fines at home,' sez Bill.

"Abe he holl'r back ergin, 'Please, suh, come back, dar's er heap mo' hyah dan you kin git dar.'

"But he so tie'd runnin' fus' atter Jacky-Lantern, an' den atter Willie Wisp, dat he hatt'r stop an' blow er lit'le. Abe an' de boys dey kotch up wid him, an' dey tussels consid'rble tryin' ter git him back, but dat boy Bill skuffle scand'lus. He thow ev'y one uv 'em flat in de mud.

" 'You all ain' nuthin' but er passel er

gooses,' he say, 'talkin' 'bout huntin' gole at home. Don't yer know yer got ter fight an' scratch, an' run, an' keep er gwine tell yer gits ter whar dese hyah gol' lights lives —den yer fines de bag er gole?'

"Fo' de boys an' Abe kin git dersefs up of'n de groun' whar Bill knock 'em, Bill wus gwine like er race hoss atter Jacky-Lantern. Bimeby de groun' 'gun ter git pow'ful sof', an' Bill, his foots 'gun ter sink down tur'bul. He can't go fas' no mo',—I tell yer de trufe, hit wus all Bill cud do ter pull hisse'f er-long."

"What was the matter with Bill, Mammy Phyllis?" whispered Mary Van.

"He in de swamp, honey, whar de groun' wus mirey,—an' hit wus full er hants too. Bill feel er hot flash pass him, an' er Jacky-Lantern'd pop up—hyah come ernuth'r hot

sumthin nuth'r, an' Willie Wisp 'u'd pop up right 'long side er him.

"Bill say, 'Is dis whar yer lives?'

"Jacky say:

> " 'Foll'r me, sonny,
> I got de money.'

"Johnny Squinch hoot up in de tree: 'Unch-oo, Doanchu go.'

"Brer Bull Frog holl'r: 'Go back, go back.'

"Ole lady Gully's hant come up in er big ball er light, an' she moan ter Bill:

> " 'Foll'r yer track,
> Ef yer wanter git back.'

"Bill say: 'Who is you?'

"Miss Gully say:

> " 'I'm yo' Mar —
> Doan go so far.'

"Bill say, 'I done start atter dis gole, an' I'm gwine see de race out.'

"Jacky-Lantern an' Willie Wisp, an' all de res' er de bad hants down in de swamp jes er poppin' up ev'y which er way, an' all uv 'em holl'r:

" 'Foll'r me, sonny,
I got de money!'

" 'Foll'r me, sonny,
I got de money,'

"Bill he dunno which way ter go, so he ax 'em: 'Which one got de money sho nuf?' But dey keeps er bobbin' up:

" 'Foll'r me, sonny,
I got de money.'

" 'Foll'r me, sonny,
I got de money.'

tell Bill say ter hissef: 'I'm gwine foll'r de one look like he got de mostes.' He take er step dis er way, an' he sink down so fur dat he pull, an' pull, an' pull, tell he pull his shoe off. Some mo' Jackys calls him way ov'r yond'r:

> " 'Foll'r me, sonny,
> I got de money.'
>
> " 'Foll'r me, sonny,
> I got de money.'

"So he try ter take er long step ov'r ter dem, but he sink so fur dis time dat he pull, an' pull, an' pull, an' pull, but he can' git his foots up.

"His ma's hant ris' up den, an' bus' out cryin':

> " 'Yer done los' yer sole,
> An' yer ain' got de gol'.'

" 'Yer done los' yer sole,
An' yer ain' got de gol'.'

"Bill he keep tryin' ter pull hisse'f up, but he done sink down ter his gallus straps."

"Please, Mam, pull him out, p-l-e-a-s-e," pleaded the little girl.

"Doan yer worry yose'f, his ma's wid dat boy."

"Yes, but she's only a spirit."

"Doan keer ef she is er hant, she's his ma, —an' de Lawd nuv'r do let dat part die out in no 'ooman. Well, dar wus Bill jes er sinkin' an' er sinkin'—"

"But he wusn't any deeper than his waist, you said, Mammy," begged Mary Van.

"He bleeg ter be er lit'le deep'r by dis time, but his ma wus cryin' an' beggin' de Lawd so hard ter spar' de boy an' give him er-nuth'r chanct, dat er big thorney bush grow up quick

'long side er Bill an' retch out hits arms, —an' de thorney part stick right thu Bill's close, so Jacky-Lantern, an' Willie Wisp an' de res' er de bad hants can't pull 'im no fur'r. Bill 'gun ter see dat he wus hangin' ov'r torment, an' dat wus de place de gole he bin runnin' atter stay, so he rech out an' grab de thorney bush, he did, an' de blood come tricklin' down on his han's whar de briers stick him, but his ma's speeret come out on de thorney bush in er big, big, big ole glow wurm, an' she say:

> " 'Hole fas',
> Hit can' las'.'

> " 'Hole fas',
> Hit can' las'.'

"He notice den dat all de uth'r lights poppin' up an' poppin' out, an' hoppin'

erbout, but de glow wurm's light wus studdy."

"Did Bill know it was his mama?" Bill's safety was uppermost in Mary Van's mind now.

"He doan 'zackly know hit, but he think he do, caze he know nobody ain' gwine stick ter him atter dey's in heb'n cep'n his ma. Darfo' he keep his eye on de glow wurm, he do. He know dat studdy light wus his ma's speeret."

"Don't let his hands bleed any more, Mammy," she begged.

"Doan yer git too skeer'd er de blood uv 'pentence, chile. Bill done sin, an' he got ter be born'd ergin, thu suf'in an' mis'ry. Howsumev'r he foll'rin' de studdy light er dat glow wurm, so 'tain' long 'fo' she show him er tree on t'oth'r side dat wus smooth an'

strong, an' Bill tu'n loose er de bush an' grab holt er de tree—Bob Wind he come an' hope de tree ter lif' Bill up,—an' Bob give one er ole man Harricane's blows dat take Bill clean out'n de mirey clay, an' lan' him on de rock."

"Was he clear out of the swamp?"

"And where was his mama?" both children pressed their questions.

"He wusn't clean out, but he wus clost on ter de aige—all he need is er lit'le mo' uv his ma's studdy light ter show him de way home,—an' he got hit too, fur dar she wus by him on de rock, whin he come thu. She crawl 'long mouty slow b'fo' him, caze Bill wus in er pow'ful bad fiix, but her light ain' flick'r, an' hit keep bright an' studdy, an' bimeby atter er long time she lan' him at home safe an' soun'."

"How could it take long?" Willis was keeping tab on the time.

"Yer see, baby, yer kin nachelly fly wid Bob Wind when yer's on de road ter Satan wid Jacky-Lantern, an' Willie Wisp lightin' hit up so purty fur yer; but whin yer starts back, an' de road's dark—an' yer got jes one lit'le light, hit take er long time ter fine yer way erbout."

"Was Abe and the boys waiting for Bill?" Mary Van desired to see the home reunited.

"Dey wus waitin', but dey wusn't settin' down waitin'. Abe an' dem boys had done dig dat gole out'n de cell'r an' buy 'em er passel er mules, an' cows, an' chick'ns, an' bilt 'em er fine house, an' raise sich craps, dat de ole farm tu'n out ter be de bigges' plantation in dem parts."

"Did Bill get home?"

"Ter be sho', son, ain't I done tole yer de glow wurm gwine p'int out de road fur him?"

"Did they give Bill some money, too?"

"Cose dey did, gal, der ma's speeret light up der h'arts so bright dat dey ain' see no rees'n ter keep all de money jes' 'caze dey stays at home an' fines hit.—Sut'nly dey give Bill his sheer."

"Did the glow worm stay with them?"

"Dey ma's speeret stay's dar, but de glow wurm hatt'r g'long back ter de swamp ter hope de res' er de po' sinn'rs dat gits tang'led up runnin' atter Jacky-Lanterns an' Willie Wispes."

IV

MISS RACE HOSS AN' DE FLEAS

MISS RACE HOSS AN' DE FLEAS

"Come on hyah, baby! Let de dog er loose—sleepy time done come ter us."

"No, Mammy, I ain't goin' ter sleepy!"

"Who say you ain't?"

"I say so, 'caus' my papa says I'm er man! My papa don't go ter sleepy in the day time!"

"Lordee! I bet he do if he gits er chanct. Dat dog gwine bite yer if you don't quit foolin' wid es tail."

"Bray ain't goin' ter bite me—Mammy, you tie the bow."

"Tie er ribbin bow on er dog's tail?"

"Oom hoo!"

"Ooom hoo? Is dat de way you speaks ter yo' ole Mammy?"

"I says, yes, ma'm."

"Well, gimme de ribbin!—but what you wanter tie er bow on er dog's tail fur? Folks puts bows 'round dey necks."

"But I want ter fool Bray, and make him think this is his head."

"You'se er sight, you is! Who on earth but you'd er thought er tryin' ter make er dog think es tail was es head! Nev' mind! Yer bett'r take keer dat he don't play er wusser joke on you, like ole Sis' Cow, an' Sis' Dog, an' Sis' Sow, an' Sis' Cat done ter ole Miss Race Hoss when she try ter pass off one er her jokes on dem!"

"Did they hurt Miss Race Hoss, Mammy?"

"Dey mos' driv her crazy, dat's what dey

done!—but you wait tell I ties dis heah bow, an' den we gwinter slip off up-stairs 'fo' Bray wake up an' ketch us."

"All right, Mammy."

Most elaborately Phyllis tied and patted the soiled blue bow.

"Now, den, Bray's sho' gwine hatt'r strain 'es mind ter fine out which een' his head stays on! Jump up hyah in Mammy's arms, so we kin run fas' 'fo' Bray wake up!"

Quite out of breath, Mammy reached the room up-stairs. Little Willis, interested only in the flight from Bray, did not realize the ruse she had played upon him until he found himself in his little crib bed. Open rebellion began.

"Boo hoo, boo hoo!"

"Ssho boy! You gwine wake Bray, an' den he's jes es sho' es sho' kin be ter play

dat trick on us dat his Gran' Mammy Dog play'd on ole Miss Race Hoss," remonstrated Phyllis.

"Boo hoo, boo hoo, I don't wanter—"

"Hush, now! Lawsee! I b'lieve I heahs er race hoss comin' down de road now! You hears him, don't yer?"

"Oom hoo!" sobbed the little boy.

"Oom hoo?"

"Yes, ma'm!"

"Well, dat's de way ole Miss Race Hoss soun' when she come er single-footin' down de road, an' seed ole Sis' Cow layin' ov'r in de cornder er de pastur' chewin' her cud, an' talkin' ter ole Sis' Sow, an' Sis' Dog, an' Sis' Cat. She look' in de pastur', she do, an' see Sis' Cow's little calf jes' er jumpin' an' er kickin' out his b'hime legs; so she holler she do:

" 'Law, Sis' Cow, whatchu doin' wid my little colt ov'r dar?'

"Sis' Cow say, 'Law, Miss Race Hoss, you sholy ain't callin' my po' little calf yo' colt?'

"Miss Race Hoss say, 'Sis' Cow I sho' is s'prised you can't tell er calf frum one er my fine colts! Jes' look how he's prancin'. I'm gwine jump ov'r dis fence, an' prance 'long side him an' let you see if we ain't 'zackly like.'

"Wid dat, she tuck er sorter back-runnin' start, an' jump blip! right in de middle er de pastur'. Sis' Cow's little calf was so proud when Miss Race Hoss 'gun ter caper her fancy steps 'long side him, dat he clean furgit 'es ma, an' try ter fancy step 'long side er Miss Race Hoss down de middle er de field.

"Po' Sis' Cow beller' an' beller' fur Mister Cow ter come an' run Miss Race Hoss off, but law, Mister Cow bizzy tendin' ter 'es bizness an' he don't hear ole Sis' Cow. Jes' den, Sis' Dog an' Sis' Sow an' Sis' Cat sorter whisper 'mongst deysefs. Pres'ntly dey all jumps up an' starts ter shakin' deyse'fs whensomever Miss Race Hoss git clost ter 'em. Fus' thing yer knows, Miss Race Hoss stop' her fancy steppin' an' holler, 'How 'pon earth come dese fleas ter git on top er me?' She jump' an' she roll', she jump' an' she roll', an' I speck she'd bin er jumpin' an' er rollin' plum tell now, ef dem fleas teeth had er bin strong nuf ter er bit thu Miss Race Hosses hide, but yer see wid all de bitin' dey bin doin', dar wasn't one uv 'em dat got er good clinch on Miss Race Hoss. So Sis' Sow's fleas say dey gwine

back home ter vit'als dey wus rais'd on, an' Sis' Dog's fleas say dey wus gwine back whar de meat wus tender, an' Sis' Cat's fleas say dey don't see no use tryin' ter git er livin' off'n hoss hide when dar wus plenty er kitten meat dat would melt in yo' mouf. So wid dat, all uv de fleas give er jump, an' lands back on Sis' Sow an' Sis' Dog an' Sis' Cat; an', honey, dem fleas ain't no sooner jumpt, dan Miss Race Hoss jump, too. She give er back-runnin' start an' wus ov'r dat fence 'fo' you know'd it; an' bless yo' heart, she come mouty nigh ter jumpin' on her own little colt dat had done foller' her onbeknownst. De colt nev'r seed es ma mirate an' car'y on so b'fo', an' he got so occipi'd watchin' her dat he plum fergit ter mention he was dar. Howsomev'r, when Miss Race Hoss come er flyin' ov'r

dat fence she come so close ter de little colt dat whil'st he was er gittin' outen de way, he trip' es own sef an' fell er sprawlin' flat.

"Po' little colt commenc' ter whinnyin' an' cryin', an' his ma was so sorry an' miserbul dat she tuck him in her arms an' 'gun ter pattin' an' er singin' ter him jes' like dis:

" 'Mama luvs de baby,
Papa luvs de baby,
Ev'ybody luvs de baby,
Hush yo' bye, doan you cry,
Go ter sleepy lill'e baby.

De lill'e calfee an' de lill'e colt, too,
Dey keeps mighty close ter dey mama,
Caze Jack Frost's out er huntin' all erbout,
Ter ketch lill'e chillun when dey holler.
Hush yo' bye, doan you cry,
Go ter sleepy lill'e baby.

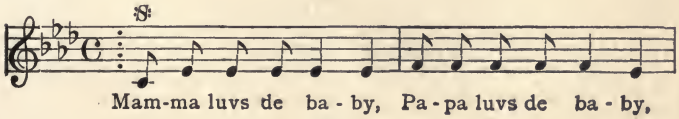
Mama luvs de baby,
Papa luvs de baby,
Ev'ybody luvs de baby.

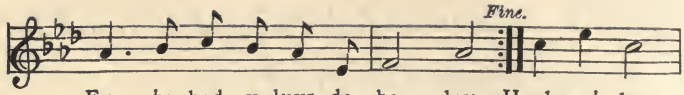
All dem horses in dat fiel'
B'longs ter you lill'e baby:
Dapple, gray, de white an' de bay,
An' all de pretty lill'e ponies.
Hush yo' bye, doan you cry,
Go ter sleepy lill'e baby.

Mama luvs de baby,
Papa luvs de baby,
Ev'ybody luvs de baby.' "

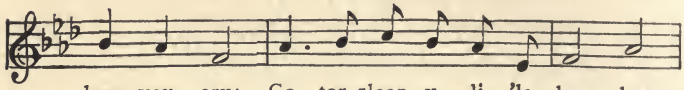
Softer and softer grew the crooning, until the little boy dropped into peaceful slumber.

"Now, den, de ole man's drapt off at las'. Bless de chile, he is er man sho' nuf; an' de way he prove he gwine be jes' like de res' er de men folks, is de way he lets de wimmen fool him; eb'n er old black 'ooman like I is!"





Ev - 'y bod - y luvs de ba - by: Hush yo' bye



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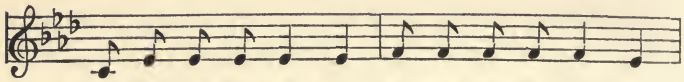

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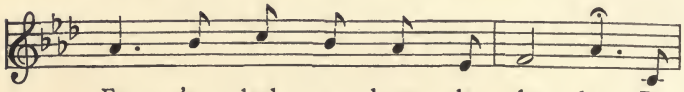

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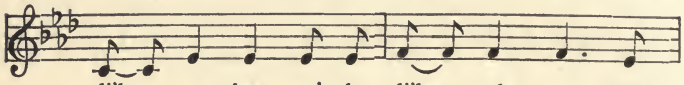

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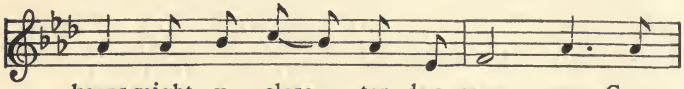

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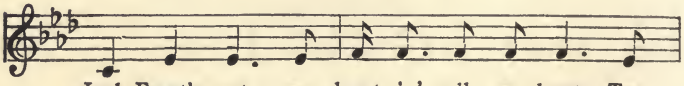

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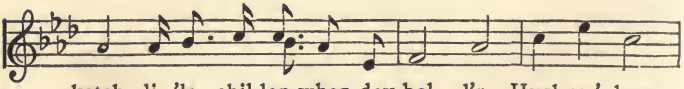

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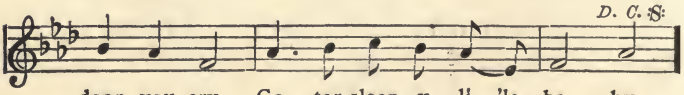

doan you cry, Go ter sleep - y li - 'le ba - by.

V

MISS RACE HOSS'S PARTY

Willis drank his soup noisily, insisted upon eating with his knife, upset a glass of milk on Jane's new Easter dress, and in the end was carried from the table kicking and screaming.

Mammy's attempts to pacify him proved futile, and fearing the wrath of his father, she gathered up the squirming, screaming boy as best she could and ran to her own room in the rear. Letting him fall upon the bed, she breathlessly dropped into a chair, and wiped the perspiration from her face with the corner of her apron.

"Now, den, jes' holl'r an' kick, tell you hollers an' kicks yo'se'f plum out."

This the boy did at a length and with a violence unbelievable, Mammy sitting all the while at the side of the bed to see that he did not roll off and humming broken pieces of song as though perfectly unconcerned. When the screaming had spent itself, and naught remained of it but long hard sniffles, Mammy began mumbling, "Well, bless de Lawd, I bin thinkin' I wus nussin' er fuss class qual'ty chile all dis time, an' hyah it tu'n out I bin wor'in' m'se'f wid one er Sis' Sow's mis'r'ble little pigs."

A low wail was the only answer to this thrust.

"Hit's de trufe! An' I done make up m' mine I ain't gwine do it no longer. What's de use er me stayin' hyah, nussin' er pig chile, when I kin g'long an' nuss er fuss

class qual'ty chile like Mary Van, an' I'm gwine do it, too!"

One little arm reached out to the old woman:

"Mammy!"

But she continued: "M'ye'rs is broke wid all dat pig holl'rin'! I don't speck I ev'r is ter heah no mo', neither!"

Sobbing and sniffling, the little boy crawled to her lap, and tried to look into her ear. She continued obstinately: "Can't heah er thing! I knows you'se in m' lap, but les'n I seed yo' face I cudn't tell ef you wus laffin' er cryin'."

Both arms went tight around her neck:

"Mammy, I won't be bad no mo'!"

Pretending to weep, Mammy said pathetically:

"I wush I cud heah! I speck Miss Lucy'll

tu'n me out now, 'caze m'ye'rs won't hear no mo', an' den I'll hatt'r go off ter de woods an' die by m'se'f 'mongst de beastes; an' I speck dey'll kill me, 'caze I can't heah 'em comin'! Boo hoo!"

At this, Willis's suffering became so intense she feared to continue the punishment and so began another strain.

"But dey tells me dat ef folks whut's bin bad prays ter de Lawd an' kisses de place whut hurts, dat some time de Lawd makes de place well ergin; dat is,—ef de bad chile promise he ain' gwine be bad no mo'."

Instantly the little swollen lips moistened with blubbers, covered first one black ear and then the other.

"An' dey got ter pray, too," suggested Mammy.

"Now I lay me!" came in broken sniffles.

Suddenly throwing up her hands, a look of rapture on her face, Mammy shouted:

"Lawsee! I b'lieve I heahs you snifflin'!" She listened carefully: "I does! Tell Mammy you loves her an' lemme see ef I kin heah you."

"I loves—" began the little boy, nestling in her arms.

" 'Cose I kin heah, but I tell yer de Lawd ain' gwine ter notice yo' pray'rs no mo', ef you keeps letting de '*pig chile part*' er you come out."

"I don't want ter be er pig chile!"

"I don't speck you does, but you sho' 'pear terday like you come straight up fum de pigsty! Don't you 'member dat party Miss Race Hoss giv' an' 'vite Sis' Sow an' her chilluns ter come ter it?"

Willis shook his head.

"Look er hear boy, who you shakin' dat head at?"

"I says, no, ma'm!"

"You'se late in de day sayin' it, too. Enyhow, Miss Race Hoss giv' er party an' 'vite Sis' Cat an' her chilluns, an' Sis' Dog an' her chilluns, an' Sis' Cow an' de lit'le calf; an' she sorter pass conversation wid Mist'r Race Hoss 'bout 'vitin' Sis' Sow an' her fambly. Mist'r Race Hoss say long as he's in pol'ticks an' want ter git 'lected ergin ter be ruler er de beastes, he speck she bett'r 'vite Sis' Sow. So Miss Race Hoss say all right! An' she done it.

"Oh, I tell you Miss Race Hoss fix up er fine party! She had mouses fur de cat fambly, an' dey wus nice, fine, live mouses too, an' bones an' meat fur de Dog fambly, an' hot bran mash mixt wid cott'n seed

meal fur Sis' Cow's fambly, an' she had buttermilk in er big trauff fur Sis' Sow an' her chilluns. An' she pile apples, an' carrots, an' ev'y sort er thing in de middle er de table. An' she had salt fur dem dat wants salt, an' sugar fur dem whut mus' have sugar.

"Well, de fuss uns ter come wus Sis' Cat an' her chilluns. Sis' Cat had done wash' her kittens' faces jes' es clean an' put dem mitt'ns on 'em dat yo' ma read ter us erbout.

"Den hyah come Sis' Dog an' her fambly. Dey all had bows 'roun' der necks an' look mouty gran'! Sis' Cow an' de calf wus curri'd slick es glass, an' I tell yer Miss Race Hoss wus glad her an' de little colt had dem ribbins tied up in der manes, 'caze Sis' Cow was sho' pressin' 'em in slickness.

"Ole Brer Bar he come down fum de

woods ter 'tend ter de dinin' room an' see dat ev'ybody git de right vit'als.

"Atter dey bin waitin' fer er spell, Brer Bar 'nounce dat soon es Sis' Sow come de party wus ready.

"All uv 'em want ter go ter eatin' dat minit, 'caze dem cats smell dem mouses, an' dem dogs moufs jes' er dreanin' wid de smell er dat meat; but dey sets dar like dey done fergit all erbout vit'als, 'caze dese heah wus qual'ty animals wid manners, I tell yer.

"Pres'ntly Miss Race Hoss low dat she see Sis' Sow comin' now, an' she seen her, too, fur hyah come Sis' Sow an' all her chilluns er runnin' ev'y which er way, wid mud all ov'r dey backs. Some uv 'em wus wet an' some uv 'em wus dry. Dey come er runnin' an' none uv 'em ain't nuv'r stop ter pass howdy wid Miss Race Hoss, 'caze dey

smell de vit'als, an' dey ain't got nuff manners ter hide de pig in 'em. Dey come er rootin' an' er gruntin' all 'roun' b'hime folks an' b'fo' fokes, tell dey pass too close ter Sis' Cat's chilluns, fur dey sorter raise up dey backs an' bushy out dey tails, an' raise up dey paws, but Sis' Cat she sorter growl sof' an' dey passify deysefs an' sets still. Sis' Dog's chilluns wanter snap es dey come er trompin' on top er dey foots, but dey 'strains deysefs 'caze dey wus fuss class qual'ty dogs.

"Brer Bar see Sis' Sow rootin' an' gruntin' her way ter de table, so he 'nounce fur 'em all ter come in ter de party. He sorter push Sis' Sow an' her chilluns off ter de buttermilk trauff. De uther folks dey sets down at de table an' acts like fuss class folks does, but Sis' Sow an' her pig chilluns ain't seed

dey vit'als 'fo' all uv 'em try ter git in de trauff wid dey foots. Dey pushes an' tromps 'pon one 'nuther, an' squeals, an' eats loud like *you done terday!*"

The brown eyes fell and an humble little voice said, "I ain't gointer do it no mo'."

"De Lawd knows I'm glad to hear it. Well, Sis' Sow an' dem, quoil an' make so much fuss, tell de uther fokes can't pass no conversation er tall, tell pres'ntly Sis' Sow an' de pigs eat up all dey vit'als an' dey come gruntin' an' er rootin' fur mo'. Dey spy dem apples an' things on de table, an' 'fo' yer knows it, dem pig chillun wus 'pon top er dat table.

"Wid dat, Brer Bar git so mad he slap 'em off fas' es dey gits on; but de fust un he slap' off fell right in 'mongst Sis' Cat's kittens. Whoopee! Dem kittin chillun fer-

gits all 'bout manners an' 'gins scratchin' an' fightin' same es pigs. Sis' Dog's chilluns jes' nachelly cudn't stan' no sich er strain on dey manners es dat, an' 'fo' yer kin say 'Jack Robson,' de kittins an' de puppies an' de pigs wus er squealin', an' er barkin', an' er spittin', an' er growlin', tell you can't hear yo' ye'rs. Sis' Sow start ter runnin' down de road wid de pigs atter her, an' de puppies atter de pigs, an' de kittins atter de puppies. Wid dat de little calf git 'cited an' he start ter kickin' out his b'hime legs, which happen ter hit de lit'le colt, an' he r'ar' hissef back an' come down on de calf, an' bofe uv 'em take out down de road er holl'rin' an' er kickin', an' er twistin' deysefs like *you done terday!*"

Again the brown eyes fell.

"Atter all de chilluns done loss dey man-

ners, dey ma's sets up lookin' at one nuther like dey loss dey las' frien'. Pres'ntly Miss Race Hoss say hit's all her fault, 'caze she had no biznes ter mix up qual'ty folks wid pig folks.

"Wid dat Sis' Cow an' Sis' Cat an' Sis' Dog speak up. 'No, Miss Race Hoss, 'tain't yo' fault, an' it 'tain't our chilluns fault, it's jes' dem pigs' fault.' Jes' den ole Brer Bar ris' up an' clap his han's an' laff like he splittin' his sides. Miss Race Hoss look 'stonish' dat he act dat er way, an' she ax him whut ail him. Soon es Brer Bar kin stop laffin', he say: 'Youall thinks yo' chilluns ain't got no pig in 'em, does you?' den he start ter laffin' ergin. Miss Race Hoss r'ar' back herse'f an' say, "Brer Bar, you done fergit whar 'bouts you'se at; 'member you'se 'mongst fuss class qual'ty!' Den dey

"WID DAT DEY ALL UV 'EM LOSE DEY MANNERS AN' START TER 'BUSIN' BER BAR SCAND'LOUS

all throws dey heads back an' tu'ns dey noses up at po' Brer Bar. Brer Bar git mad den an' he stop laffin' an' say, 'Yo' chilluns ain't de onliest uns got pig in 'em! All you-all got it, too. Ev'ybody got it. Some folks got mo' en uthers got; all dis hyah mann'rs you'se braggin' 'bout ain't nuthin' but er kiv'r ter hide de pig dat's in yer. Keep er way fum de pigs ef you don't wanter show yo' pig side.'

"Wid dat dey all uv 'em lose dey manners an' start ter 'busin' Brer Bar scand'lous. Sis' Cow beller' out her madness, an' Sis' Cat mew an' spit out her'n, an' Sis' Dog growl an' bark out her'n, an' Miss Race Hoss jes' r'ar' up an' foam at de mouf.

"Brer Bar look like he fixin' ter hu't sumbody, den he amble off t'ards de woods he did, an' den tu'n hissef 'roun' an' holl'r, 'I

tole yer so!' Jes' lis'n ter all er youall right now, actin' wusser en dem pigs in de buttermilk trauff."

"An' Brer Bar speak de trufe! An' he speak de trufe when he say all us got er pig side, too."

"My mama ain't!"

Phyllis hesitated: "No, I don't speck she is; dat is, ef she is, her 'ligion done wash it all out, 'caze yo' ma think' mo' 'bout ev'ybody else 'fo' she do herse'f,—but you got er pig side, an' ef you don't take keer hit'll grow ter be er hog side, too, dat you nuv'r is ter git nuff manners ter hide neither. Come on an' go finish yo' dinner, boy, an' let Mammy eat her'n."

VI

NED DOG AND BILLY GOAT

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Phyllis was dozing on the top step of the side veranda while little Willis, in the gravel walk below, was playing with a Noah's Ark. The animals were in grand parade when one of them met with an accident. Willis thought a moment, then, taking the loose ends of a string tied to one of the fuzzy toys, he climbed the steps to where Phyllis had just fallen in a peaceful nod against the pillar. He clumsily slipped the string between her open lips, and, with a slap and sputter, Mammy opened her eyes.

"Name er de Lawd, boy, whut is you tryin' ter do?"

"I want you ter be er billy goat."

"You wants sumthin' I nuv'r is ter be. I'm willin' ter be er hoss an' on er pinch I'll be er mule, but dey ain't no time I'm willin' ter be no ole billy goat fur nobody."

"Please, Mammy," laying a hand on her cheek in an effort to pull her face to him, "m' billy goat's got his legs broke, an' I won't have any goat if you don't be one."

"How come you don't tu'n one dem dogs in er goat?" suggested Phyllis, her face obstinately averted.

"They haven't got any horns!"

"I ain't got no horns neether," asserted Mammy.

"But you can make some," persisted Willis.

"You think I'm gwineter pull dis bandanner off an' roll my ole gray wool inter

horns, does you?" chuckled the old nurse.

Willis nodded.

"Well, you foolin' yo'se'f, dat's all I got ter say." But when Willis began to fret, Mammy relented: "I tell yer dat dog won't know 'esse'f fum er goat, ef you calls him goat; 'caze I knows erbout er dog an' er goat dat can't tell t'other fum which."

"No you don't," objected the tormentor tugging at her arm.

"I tells you I does, 'caze one day Mister Man went out ter hunt er dog an' er goat fur his lit'le boy. He see Sis' Dog an' her fambly on de side er de road, an' dey 'pears ter be in er mouty commotion 'bout sump'n. Mister Man holler' an' ax whut ail 'em. Sis' Dog say she foun' one er Sis' Nanny Goat's chilluns layin' out in de pastur' des er blatin' all by 'esse'f, an' she

dunno whut ter do wid it. Mister Man say, 'I'll take keer uv it, an' I'd like moutily ter take keer er one er yo' chilluns, too.' Sis' Dog tell him 'surtiny,' dat it 'ud make her turr'bul proud fur one er her chilluns ter live up at his fine house. So Mister Man liftes de goat an' de puppy up on Miss Race Hosses back 'long side er him an' flies 'crost de country ter his house. When Mister Man's ole lady see him, she th'ow up her han's an' say, 'Name er de Lawd, Mister Man, whut you specks ter do wid dat goat?' Mister Man say: 'Oh! I'll des put it out hyah wid de puppy an' raise 'em bofe ter-gether.' "

"Wasn't the little boy glad his papa kept the goat?" interrupted Willis.

"Is you glad I'm tellin' dis tale?"

"Yes'm."

"Dat's 'zackly de way Mister Man's boy feel, 'ceptin' mo' so. Dey puts er pan er milk out in de cow house, an' bofe uv 'em eats outen it tergether. When dey gits big ernuf ter eat like sho' nuf beastes, de little boy puts goat feed fur de goat an' dog vit'als fur de dog."

"What's the dog's name?"

"He wus jes' name Collie Dog when he live wid his mammy, but when he start ter livin' wid white fokes, de lit'le boy name 'im Ned."

"An' what's the goat's name?"

"He ain't got nuthin' ter do wid dat, 'caze de Lawd done already name him Billy. Well, when Billy Goat look' at his feed, an' Ned Dog look' at his vit'als, dey bofe feels mouty proud, 'ceptin' dey don't seem ter make out howcum it ain't mix'd tergether; so

Billy he take an' run over an' try ter eat bones an' meat, an' Ned he run ter Billy's box an' try ter eat hay an' bran mash; an' dey keep on tryin' ter eat one nuthers vit'als long es dey live'. Pres'ntly, Billy grow so big dat he 'gun ter grazin' roun' 'mongst de flow'rs an' grass, an' I speck he run in de house sumtimes, too, but it 'pears dat flow'r buds tas'e mo' nicer ter 'im dan grass; so Mister Man's old lady 'gun ter quoil an' mirate an' tell him, 'You des got ter tetter dat goat!' "

"I don't want 'im ter tetter Billy!" exclaimed the child, and his brown eyes filled with tears.

"Pshaw, boy, er tetter ain't nuthin' ter hu't nobody! It's des er rope you ties roun' de horns er beastes an' de uther een' you ties ter er stob in de groun'! Well,

when Billy find 'esse'f tied ter dat rope so he can't go in de house and can't go in de flow'r gyarden, he des cry an' cry. Ned Dog try ter stay wid 'im much es he kin; but when he see Mister Man an' de little boy settin' off down de road on Miss Race Hoss an' de little colt, his foots des nachelly go bookety! bookety! b'hime 'im 'd'out knowin' it. His heart tell him ter g'long back an' stay wid Billy, but his foots say dey ain't er gwine do no sich er thing. 'Cose he cudn't hep 'esse'f ef his foots 'fuse ter take 'im home. Atter while, when he gits back, Billy done cry 'esse'f plum sick. He say he don't see howcum he tied up an' Ned Dog ain't; an' Ned Dog say he don't neether; 'caze you see Ned think Billy's er dog an' Billy think 'esse'f er dog, too. Dat's de way wid some fokes. Heap uv 'em

thinks dey's big dogs when dey ain't nuthin' but er old goat!" Mammy concluded with emphasis.

"Go on, Mammy," demanded Willis, pushing her hand off of the curl she was trying to straighten.

"Ain't dat ernuf? I done prove' you kin make er goat outen dat Noah's ark dog."

"Yes, but I want the little boy ter let Billy loose."

"Well, his ma'll give him er spankin' ef he do. Dat boy darsent ter tech dat tetter. Long 'bout atter dinner time, Ned he git so miserbul lis'nin' ter Billy hollerin' dat he 'gun ter gnaw an' pull at de stob; den he try ter scratch it up; but it was too deep; so he take an' go ter pullin' at de rope ergin'; an' bimeby de knot come off. He ketch de knot in his teef and den he tell Billy ter

g'long whar he's er mind ter. Billy kick up es b'hime legs an' fly down de road wid Ned Dog b'hime him holdin' on ter de rope. Billy he eat all 'long de road, an' Ned Dog foll'r 'long b'hime wharsomever Billy choose ter go, 'caze yer see Ned feel de 'sponsibility er loosin' Billy. Atter while, Ned Dog beg Billy ter come on an' go home! He tell 'im his jaws nigh 'bout broke clampin' on dat knot. But Billy say he ain't er gwine, tell he eat 'esse'f plum full er dem flow'r buds. No, Lawd, Billy ain't thinkin' bout Ned long es he kin joy es own sef. Ned he 'gun ter howl an' bark wid de jaw ache, but Billy too full er 'esse'f ter notice Ned. Yes, Lawd, Billy des like some fokes I knows, too."

"Me, Mammy?" demanded the intent little boy.

"Yes, I speck de cap fit you er heap er times, but you wusn't de pusson I had m' mine on des den," replied Mammy complacently. "Billy keep er gwine on, an' Ned des er draggin' 'esse'f erlong wid de jaw ache tell bimeby, dey comes ter de old log fence 'roun' de pastur'. Billy he try ter jump de fence, but Ned he crawl thu; but yer see Billy can't jump high ernuf 'caze Ned's pullin' de rope on de uther side, so Billy gits tangled up on one er de rails. Ned he run back when he see Billy's hangin'; but he gits back thu er diffunt hole ergin, an' dat twistes de rope so tight dat Billy gits in er mouty bad fix 'fo' you knows it. He 'gun ter blate an' holl'r an' Ned drop' de rope an' 'gun ter howl; but dat nuv'r done no good, an' it nuv'r do, do no good in dis woel."

"What, Mammy?"

"Jes' ter stan' up an' holler an' cry like *you* does sometimes! You got ter go ter work an' do sumthin' ef you 'specks ter ontangle yo'se'f in dis woel', an' dat's whut come 'cross Ned's mind atter he stan' up an' holler hisse'f hoarse. He lope out an' run home, he do, an' he bark at Mister Man an' run out to'ards de road. He bark' at de lit'le boy an' run out ergin; but none uv 'em can't make out howcum he act so cur'us. He run out in de back yard an' howl an' bark, an' de lit'le colt ax him whut ails him, he tell 'im Billy's mos' chok'd ter death, hangin' on de pastur' fence. De colt give er jump ov'r de back fence an' him an' Ned take out, jes' er t'arin' down de big road. De lit'le boy an' Mister Man seed de colt break loose an' dey flew atter him an' all

uv 'em got ter Billy jes' in time ter keep 'im fum chokin' ter death."

"Did Billy die?" asked the little boy in anxiety.

"Nor, honey, 'caze he nuv'r had rope ernuf; but ef he had er had er little mo' rope him an' all de uther foolish folks like 'im wud er bin dead long ergo!"

VII

HOW THE BILLY GOAT LOST HIS TAIL

HOW THE BILLY GOAT LOST HIS TAIL

The side lawn was the scene of a noisy fray between the old house cat and big dog, Bray. Servants from the neighborhood had quickly gathered to urge on the sport. Some of the children, Willis among the loudest, were crying and beseeching the men servants to save "poor Kitty," which they reluctantly did to the extent of allowing her to escape up an old crab apple tree.

"I wush ter de Lawd he had er kilt her," said Phyllis, letting her rheumatic limbs down by degrees to a sitting posture on the grass, " 'Ceitful old thing, I don't blame Bray!"

"I love my Kitty!" cried Willis as he ran to the tree. There he earnestly advised the cat to stay just where she was until Bray went to sleep. A few of the larger children lingered expecting another fight, as Bray continued to bark and jump about the tree.

"You ne'en ter tell dat cat ter take keer er *her*se'f! She des settin' up dat tree glis'nin' dem old green eyes on Bray an' sayin' ter 'erse'f: 'Nuv'r mind, I'm gwine fix you soon es I git down fum hyah!' "

"What can she do, Mammy Phyllis?" asked one of the larger girls. "She's too little to hurt Bray!"

"Yas, an' ole Sis' Cat wus lit'ler'n her, an' yit she come mighty nigh ter fixin' Ned Dog an' Billy Goat, too! Doan nuv'r put no 'pindence in Sis Tabby's fokes."

"Oh, Mammy Phyllis, *please* tell us

about Ned Dog," and the children gathered around her pressing the request.

"Doan ax me ter tell nuthin' long as Willis keep foolin' roun' Bray wid dat switch!"

Mammy pretended to rise, but two of the older children ran and coaxed Willis to sit by them and listen to the story. "Now, Mammy Phyllis, go on, he's going to sit still, ain't you Willis?" said one.

"I want ter whoop Bray," muttered Willis only half satisfied.

"Atter I tells you how 'ceitful Sis' Cat act ter Ned Dog, I boun' you'll change yo' chune! 'Member dat party Miss Race Hoss give an' how it broke up wid all uv 'em quoilin' an' 'busin' ole Brer Bar? Po' Brer Bar nuv'r got no vit'als neeth'r. Well, when Sis' Cat lef' dat party, she wus

so mad she cudn't walk straight! She come er flyin' down de big road right catacornder'd! Dat is, she run in de road one minit, an' de nex' un, she fotch up on de side er de mount'in; den hyah she come back ergin in de road! Well, one uv de times she lit on de mount'in she fotch up right in front er Mist'r Rattlesnake's house. Mist'r Rattlesnake had des got out er bed an' stuck his head out'n his house ter git er little fresh air, when Sis' Cat come *blip! right in his face!* He lick' out his tongue an' say:

" 'Name er de Lawd, Sis Cat!'

"Sis' Cat say: 'Name er de Lawd, Mist'r Rattlesnake! Howcum you gittin' up dis time de year?'

" 'I thought I heerd m' 'larm clock go off,' he say.

" 'You ain' hyah no thunder Mister Rat-

tlesnake! You kin g'long back ter baid an' take er three weeks' nap,' sez Sis' Cat.

" 'I'm sho' I heerd thunder er som'thin' pow'ful like it,' sez Mister Rattlesnake.

"Sis' Cat tell him: 'You des heah de breakin' up uv Miss Race Hoss's party! Dat's whut you heah! Brer Bar act so outlashus we des hatt'r 'buse him an' run him off!'

"Mist'r Rattlesnake set an' look at Sis' Cat er minit, 'caze yer see he ain' wake' up good yit. Den he lick out es tongue an' say: 'Sis' Cat, you sholy ain' th'owin' erway no fren's is yer? I knows I ain' got narry single fren' an' I knows you got pow'ful few yo'se'f! 'Pears ter me yer better g'long an' eat up dem words you sed ter Brer Bar!' Den he lick out his tongue ergin an' go on back ter baid.

"Sis' Cat set right dar an' study, she do! Den she make up her mind ter take Mist'r Rattlesnake' 'vice. She slunk eroun' sorter soft an' sneakin' like thu de woods tell she come ter Brer Bar's house. She bum! bum! on de do' an' Brer Bar ax, 'Who dat?'

"She say: 'Sis' Cat.'

" 'Is you Sis' Wile Cat er Sis' Tabby Cat?' ax Brer Bar.

" 'Sis' Tabby Cat.'

" 'You'se at de wrong do', Sis' Tabby Cat,' sez Brer Bar.

"Sis' Cat start ter cryin': 'Oh! Brer Bar! Brer Bar! *please* lemme come in! I'm mos' dead, Brer Bar!'

"Brer Bar say: 'You bett'r git erway fum hyah, Sis' Cat, 'caze I'm li'ble ter eat enythin' I lays my paws on! I nuv'r had ernuf ter eat at de party, an' I ain' pervide m'

fambly wid nuthin' ter eat, an' we'se all s' hungry dat we'se dangus', Sis' Cat!'

"Sis' Cat keep on cryin': 'I know'd dat Brer Bar;—I know'd you an' yo' fambly was hongry, an' dat's howcum I ter come, Brer Bar! I come ter tell you whar some good vit'als was des waitin' fur yer!' "

"When Brer Bar hear dat, he sorter crack de do' an' poke his nose thu: 'Sis' Tabby Cat,' he say, 'you smells good ernuf ter eat yo'se'f!'

"Sis' Cat mos' skeerd ter death when she heah dat, an' she mos' die when she feel Brer Bar's mouf dreanin' an' drippin' on her back; so she stop' cryin' an' sorter back off kinder easy like an' tell Brer Bar dat Ned Dog got de fattes' Billy Goat he ev'r seed; an' ef he'd come down ter de ole sweet-gum tree in Mist'r Man's pastur' 'bout

dark, she'd have him er whole tree full er honey, an' de Billy Goat, too!"

Willis's lips began to tremble. He suddenly left his place among the children and falling on Phyllis's breast, sobbed aloud.

"Brer Bar ain' eat de goat yit! He ain' eb'n got fur es de sweet-gum tree! Set hyah in Mammy's lap so nuthin' can't git you, an' lis'n ter de res' er de tale!" Snuggling him in her arms, she continued: "It nuv'r tuk Sis' Cat long ter light out fum Brer Bar's house, I tell yer! Dat dreanin' mouf er his'n skeer' her so bad dat she nuv'r tetch de groun' mo'n six times 'fo' she wus plum out'n de woods. Den she come er cropin' up ter Mister Man's house. She look all erroun' she do, an' see Ned Dog wusn't at home; den she g'long in de barn whar Billy wus huntin' fur sumthin' ter

eat. She take er seat in de winder by de little colt's stall. Bimeby she say, 'Billy, Miss Turkey Hen's givin' er mouty fine party ternight, down at de old sweet-gum tree in de pastur' an' she tole me ter ax you ter come.' Billy couldn't fine nuthin' ter eat in de barn but some old straw Miss Race Hoss had done slep' on, so he turn' roun' mouty quick when Sis' Cat tell him he wus ax ter er party. He sorter laff an' say: 'I wond'r howcum her ter ax me.'

"Sis' Cat say: 'Caze she say you'se de fines' an' slickes' uv all Mister Man's beastes; an' she gwine have some nice lit'le tender rose bushes fur you ter eat, an' er heap er fine vit'als you loves.'

"Billy Goat des switch his tail an' grin, 'caze yer know he wusn't nuthin' but er man goat, an' 'cose he b'lief all de comp'ments

Sis' Cat choose ter stuff 'im wid. An' all de men fokes is des de same, tell dis day! ev'y Lord's blessed one uv 'em! When Sis' Cat see she done turn Billy's head plum roun' she tell 'im not ter tell Ned Dog erbout de party, 'caze Miss Turkey Hen say she ain' got 'nuf room but fur des one uv de fambly. Den, when Sis' Cat heah Ned Dog er comin', she lit out, 'caze she nuv'r want 'im ter know dat she had enything ter do wid Brer Bar eatin' Billy Goat. Yer see Sis' Cat wus tryin' ter keep in wid bofe sides."

Slipping her fingers under the bandanna kerchief bound about her head, and scratching slowly, Mammy chuckled to herself: "Dey's er heap er fine folks in dis hyah town des like Sis' Cat, too! Yes, Lawd, er heap uv 'em!"

"Don't talk about people! We just want to hear about beastes!" urged little Mary Van.

"I hatt'r do it sometimes, chile, 'caze fokes an' beastes has er heap er symptoms des erlike! Well, bless de Lawd, Billy ain't no sooner seed Ned 'fo he 'gun ter brag erbout de party."

" 'Whose party?' sez Ned Dog.

" 'Miss Turkey Hen's havin' er fine party down at de ole sweet-gum tree ternight 'bout dark,' sez Billy.

"Ned Dog think Billy tellin' er story, an' he say, 'Sis' Turkey Hen ain' givin' no party ternight! I done see Mist'r Turkey Gobble an' de chilluns in bed when I come thu de peach orchard an' old Miss Turkey Hen, she wus des tyin' her nightcap on her own se'f.'

"But, yer see, Billy wus too hard-head'd ter lis'n ter enybody, so he up an' say, 'I can't hep whut you seen; Sis' Cat say she gwine have spechul vit'als fur me, an' I'm gwine!' Den Billy walk up an' down breshen de flies off'n his back wid his long tail."

Seeing that some objections were about to be raised as to the length of the tail, Phyllis hastened to add: "In dem days goats had tails des like hosses. Soon es Billy menshun Sis' Cat's name, Ned Dog tell him Sis' Cat layin' er trap fur him; but 'tain't no use ter argufy wid hard-head'd fokes like Billy, so Ned Dog let 'im g'long ter de party; but he crope close on b'hime 'im, an' on de way, he come up wid Mist'r Bloodhoun' an' ax 'im ter g'long wid 'im. Mist'r Bloodhoun' say he pow'ful broke down trailin' er runaway

nigger all day, but ef Ned was 'spectin' er rompus he 'speck he'd hatt'r jine him. Bimeby, when Billy wus mos' down ter de sweet-gum tree, dey hides deyse'fs in er clump er red haw bushes. Ole Brer Bar he had done come down fum de mount'in early, an' wus standin' b'hime de tree des er gorgin' 'esse'f wid honey an' peepin' out, lookin' fur Billy Goat. When he see Billy come switchin' 'esse'f 'cross he pastur', he 'gun ter fidgitin' so he can't wait ter git es teef in him, an' he bus' out fum b'hime de tree an' come er runnin' t'ards Billy. Billy wus so skeered he jes' had sense ernuf ter turn 'esse'f roun'! Brer Bar ketch 'im by de tail. Brer Bar pull, an' Billy pull. Billy pull, an' Brer Bar pull! Bimeby, de tail come off in Brer Bar's claw. Den Billy lit out; but Brer Bar grab 'im by de b'hime leg. Des

den Mister Bloodhoun' an' Ned Dog wus on top er Brer Bar! Ned Dog grab Brer Bar's paw in es teefs an' Brer Bar drop Billy an' grab Ned by de ye'r an' wus mos' clampin' es jaws on Ned's haid when Mist'r Bloodhoun' clinch 'im by de th'oat! Brer Bar ax Mister Bloodhoun' please ter turn es th'oat loose, dat he got sumthin' ter tell 'im! Mist'r Bloodhoun' 'nounce: 'I won't turn you plum loose, but I'll hol' yo' th'oat easy like tell you kin 'splain yo'se'f!'

"Den Brer Bar splainify 'esse'f an' beg so hard, tell bimeby dey 'scuses 'im, an' he amble' on home fas' es he kin. Den dey come on home ter settle matters wid Sis' Cat. Sis' Cat was er settin' by Billy moanin' wid him 'bout losin' es tail."

"Did his tail ever grow out any more?" asked a sympathetic boy.

"No, honey, goats ain't nuv'r had no tails ter speak uv sense dat day; but hoopee! hyah come Ned Dog an' Mister Bloodhoun'! Dey come er yelpin' wid dey tongues er hangin' out. Dey pounce right whar Sis' Cat wus settin', but dey ain't pounce quick as Sis' Cat kin jump; 'caze by de time dey hits Sis' Cat's seat, Sis' Cat, she was plum on top er de cow house, standin' dar wid 'er back up, an' her tail bushy out. Ned Dog dare her ter come down an' splain 'erse'f; but Sis' Cat say she ain't got nuthin' ter 'splain, an' what's mo' she doan take no dog's dare. An' dat howcum dey quoil an 'spute whensumever dey meets tell dis day."

"But, Mammy Phyllis, *all* cats are not as mean as ole Sis' Cat," ventured a little girl.

"Honey, my gran-mammy wus black! What color is I?"

"Black!" chimed all the children.

"An' dat crab apple tree,—what sort er apples does you git off'n *hit?*"

"Crab apples!" was the answer.

"Well, ole Sis' Cat was mean an' 'ceitful, an'all 'er chillun is gwine ter be des like her long es I stays black an' dem crab apples stays sour. Now run erlong,—dere's de fust bell!"

VIII

SHOO FLY

SHOO FLY

Phyllis was eating her dinner under the cherry tree near the kitchen door. Willis seated himself on the grass in front of her.

"Mammy, you swallowed a fly then," he said with earnestness.

"Look er heah, boy, ain't you had ernuf ter eat, dat you got ter set hyah an' sight ev'y piece uv vit'als I puts in my mouf?"

"Well, you didn't want to eat a fly, did you?" he answered defensively.

"Ef I eats er fly, hit's me doin' hit, ain't hit?" with a leg of a chicken poised half way to her mouth.

"But Mama said they'd poison you." Willis was in trim for argument.

"Yo' ma got er heap er new fangl'd notions; I dunno howcum fokes jes' startin' ter git fly pis'n'd. We bin eatin' vit'als dat flies lights on, sense long 'fo' yo' ma wus born'd. An' An' Ca'line, dat's mos' er hundred ye'r ole, say dat whin er fly light on her 'lasses she lick ev'y speck uv hit off'n him 'fo' she let him git erway."

"Uncle Hugh says they'll make you awful sick," he pressed, though feeling his position weakened.

"Dey doan make nobody sick, but dem whut puts on so miny airs," trying to talk with her mouth over full.

"My mama don't put on airs," he insisted with a tone of injury.

"She do too—dey ain' nobody put on es min'y fly airs es yo' ma. I heah one dese ve'y lit'le shoo flies talkin' 'bout Miss Lucy

las' week. Shoo Fly settin' up heah on de lim' er dis tree talkin' ter Hoss Fly. He tell Hoss Fly he ain' had er squar' meal fur er mont'.

"Hoss Fly tell 'im ter come on an' g'long down ter de stable an' take dinn'r wid 'im.

"Shoo Fly say, 'I can' git no sumthin' ter eat out'n corn, an' oats, I wants chickin' pie, an' sweet tat'rs, an' blackberry dumplin' sich es fokes eats—go off, boy,' he say, 'I ain' no Hoss Fly.'

"Hoss Fly say, 'Hits er pity yer ain't—yer wud live ter be er ole'r man if yer wus.' "

"Why, Mammy, 'caus' Mister Hoss Fly's the biggest?" His eyes followed her, as she went to the kitchen door and exchanged her plate for one of blackberry dumpling.

"De bigges' ain' got nuthin' ter do wid hit," as she resumed her seat; "hit de fokes

dey haster 'sociate wid, dat's dang'us. Dey ain' nuthin' mo' dangersum ter er fly'n yo' ma," she looked him straight in the eye. "She got all de wind'rs fas'n'd up so yer can't shet er bline; an' she got dat sticky pap'r you sets in ev'ytime yer goes in de kitchin; an' she got dem pisnous flow'r boxes settin' ev'ywhar; an' she run 'roun' all day atter one fly, hittin' 'bout de house like de fly wus pis'n, sho' nuf. Miss Lucy's er sight, dat's de trufe, an' I doan blame Shoo Fly fur busin' her."

The soft dumpling rolled down her throat, and Willis swallowed in sympathy.

"Is Shoo Fly on the limb now?"

"Nor, he tak'n din'r wid me terday, an' las' night, he tak'n supp'r wid Miss Lucy," she laughed aloud.

"Did Mama try to kill him?" anxiously.

"She sho' did, son, but dis heah Shoo Fly got er haid er Miss Lucy las' night," still she laughed. "Yas, suh, Shoo Fly tell Hoss Fly he sho' gwine perish ef he doan git er bite fum sumwhars."

"Hoss Fly ax 'im: 'Is yer skeer'd ter go in Miss Lucy's house fur vit'als?"

"Shoo Fly say, 'I ain' feerd er no Miss Lucy—I bin buttin' m' haid up 'ginst sum'in' nuth'r in de wind'rs, tell m' haid right full er bumps.'

"Hoss Fly say, 'You ain' got no sense, Shoo Fly,—'cose you can't git in dat wire foolishness! De onlies' way ter git in, is ter set up on de porch, an' wait fur sum de fokes ter op'n de do'.'

"Dat peart'n Shoo Fly up moutily, an' he say he gwine dat minit, an' he do. He git ter de front porch jes' es Miss Ma'y wus

fancy talkin' ter one er her beaux. Shoo Fly slip in, an' fly back ter de pantry an' light on sum er dis heah right heah," she scraped the butter sauce from the edge of the plate and smacked her lips. "Whoopee, dat sort'r vit'als drive de skeer out'n enny fly. Shoo Fly jes' hop erbout, an' gorge hisse'f, tell bimeby he can't hole no mo'. He start ter go out de wind'r, but he 'memb'r 'bout dem bumps on his haid, so he tu'n roun' ter go in de parler, whin he come 'cross Miss Lucy! She start at 'im wid her fly-kill'r, an' sakes er live!—you ort'r seed de way Shoo Fly make Miss Lucy run erbout dat house!" Again she laughed, calling to mind Miss Lucy's daily fly fights. "But Shoo Fly hide b'hime yer gran'pa's pictur' ov'r de mantelpiece, an' wint fas' ter sleep. He doan wake up no mo' tell supp'r time, neeth'r. He

g'long in de dinin' room ter supp'r wid de fambly, an' whin dey sets down, he tak'n his seat on de cream pitch'r. Miss Lucy knock at 'im, she do, den he recoleck de fuss him an' her done had wid one nuth'r, so he g'long ov'r ter Miss Ma'y's beau's plate, whar he know he kin eat all he want ter."

"Wasn't he afraid of Shoo Fly?" asked Willis, surprised.

"I nuv'r heah 'im pass no 'pinion 'bout de matt'r. Shoo Fly know dat man's eyes too bizzy lookin' at sum'in' purtier'n him, an' he know ergin de man got too much mann'rs ter set up an' fight flies whin he's vis'tin'.

"Miss Lucy, she sot dar an' mos' fidgit herse'f ter death, whin Shoo Fly light fus' in de gent'muns vit'als, den up on his nose. De man breash 'im off his nose er heap er

times, but Shoo Fly g'long back ev'y time, 'caze hit wus er nice place ter wash de greese off'n his face an' han's. An' ev'y time he git coffee er ice cream, er enny thing on his foots, he g'long back ter sumwhars on dat man's face ter wash his han's, an' wipe 'em on his coat tails. Miss Lucy say she know de man think she got er million flies in dat house.

"Shoo Fly done full er vit'als now, so he g'long ter bed b'hime yer gran'pa's pictur'. In de mawnin', he git up an' look erbout, he do, an' I tell yer he git pow'ful wo' out waitin' fur dem sleepy haid'd niggers ter start dey wurk, so by de time de cant'lopes git fix'd, Shoo Fly wus so hongry dat he eat hisse'f plum full er mush-mil'n 'fo' brekfus' time. He fly 'roun' an' zamine dat fly pap'r but he ain' got no room fur no mo' eatin';

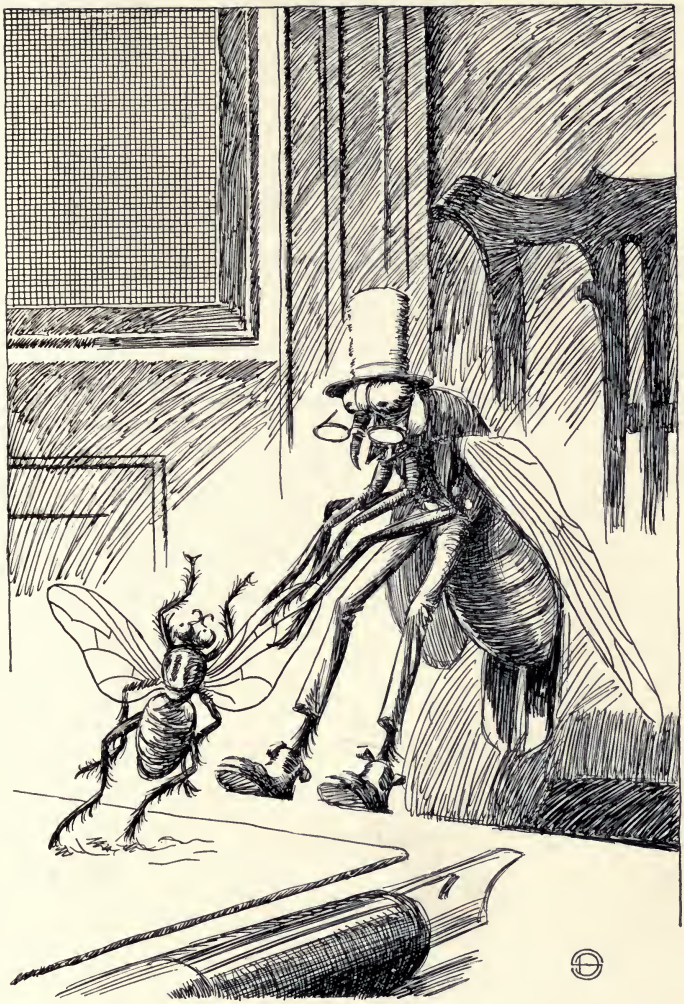
den he look at dat cur'us Pison flow'r, but he keep way fum dat, 'caze he say he ain' no bee. Jes' den heah come Miss Lucy wid 'er fly-kill'r. Him an' her dances considerbul ergin, but bimeby he g'long ter take er nap b'hime yer gran'pa, an' Miss Lucy set down ter read de mawnin' pap'r.

"Whin he wake up, he sort'r feel holl'r, he do, 'caze cant'lope res' mighty light yer knows, so he g'long ter hunt sumpin' nuth'r ter eat. He think Miss Lucy done fergit 'im by now, but no, Lawd, he dunno Miss Lucy, fur he ain' buz hisse'f mo'n er time er two, 'fo' Miss Lucy take atter him. She skeer 'im so bad, dat he fergit all 'bout dem wire things in de wind'r, but Lawsee, whin his haid come 'ginst de wire, hit knock de senses out'n 'im, an' whin dat fly-kill'r er Miss Lucy's hit his toe, hit tu'n 'im so sick,

he fell blip! right on de fly pap'r. Mussy grashus! you ort'r heah Shoo Fly holl'rin' an' er buzzin' fur Hoss Fly.

" 'Bout dis time, whin Hoss Fly doan see nuthin' er Shoo Fly on de cherry tree, he g'long ter git er peep in at de wind'r ter see ef he kin git enny news uv 'im; an' bless de Lawd, he ain' git ter de wind'r 'fo' he heah Shoo Fly holl'rin': 'Oh, Hoss Fly, p-l-e-a-s-e come hope me out'n heah!'

"Hoss Fly run ter de front do', but dat's shet tight, so he take an' run 'roun' ter de kitchin do' whar he know dey's allus keerles'. He fly ter de kitchin' do' an' seen Kitty standin' wid her foot in de do' passin' news wid ole An' Malviny, an' he know he got plenty time ter go in an' 'ten' ter his biznes', 'fo' dat do' git shet ergin. He fly thu de kitchin, an' make fur de liberry, whar



"SHOO-FLY HOLL'R, 'LOOK OUT FUR M' LEGS!'"

po' Shoo Fly had done mos' buzz hisse'f ter death.

"Hoss Fly swoop down an' grab 'im by de wing, but Shoo Fly holl'r, 'Look out fur m' legs! Oh, Lawdy, you'se pullin' m' wing off— Oh, Lawdy, Lawdy!'

"Nobody dunno de mis'ry po' Shoo Fly wus in. I tell yer Hoss Fly wurk mouty keerful ter git 'im all out tergeth'r. Den he liftes 'im up, but he doan hatt'r hole on ter 'im, 'caze Shoo Fly so sticky he hole his own se'f on. Hoss Fly come er flyin' back thu de kitchin."

"Did Kitty have the door open for him?"

"Cose, boy, ain't I done alreddy tole yer Kitty an' Mal gwine talk tell Miss Lucy come an' put 'em ter wurk? Yas, suh, Hoss Fly didn't had no trub'le gittin' 'im out er dat kitchin,—an' he come flyin' straight ter

de stable, an' light wid Shoo Fly on top er de kerrige. He tell 'im ter roll hisse'f erbout on de kiv'r tell he git shed er dat sticky pison on 'im."

"Did Shoo Fly go back to the house when he got well?"

Willis rose as he saw the old woman preparing to take her plate to the kitchen.

"Nor, suhree, Shoo Fly say, he done got his full er big fokes! He say he done foun' out hit wus er heap bett'r ter g'long an' live whar de Lawd born'd yer ter live at, dan ter go 'mongst fokes dat doan want yer."

IX

ELECTION DAY

ELECTION DAY

"Mammy, can't my papa be mayor if he wants to?" bragged Willis, darting a satisfied look at Mary Van.

"I'll tell yer mo' 'bout dat dis time termorrer," was the unexpected reply.

"Yahn, yahn, yahn," taunted Mary Van.

"He can, too," retorted Willis.

Willis's papa was a candidate for mayor, hence in the family politics colored the conversation from the parlor through the nursery even to the kitchen.

"De reason I says whut I does," Mammy apologized, "is 'caze dey tells me er dark hoss kin jump in at de las' minit an bus' de whole thing all ter pieces."

"Does he kick up and run away?" Willis jerked at her apron to hasten the reply.

"Dey runs erway wid de 'lection sometimes, ef de uth'r run'rs ain' sho' nuf race hosses an' got mighty strong harnes' on 'em."

"Mammy, less me an' Mary Van be race hosses, an' you be er dark hoss, an' see which one can beat."

"I low ef we-all wuster race hoss 'roun' dis hyah garret, 'tain' long fo' yo' ma'll be de dark hoss ter do de beatin'."

"No, Mammy, put m' harness on," shaking the bells in impatience.

"I can't play no race hoss up hyah terday, boy, 'caze Miss Lucy got her mine on 'lection news, an' she say you got ter be quiet."

"No, I'm going to be a race horse, put m' harness on!"

"Auntie might whip you, Willis," ven-

tured Mary Van, "mightn't she, Mammy Phyllis?"

"She whup 'im in er minit, ef he fool wid her terday."

"Well, Mammy—" he fretted.

"Lis'n hyah, baby—Miss Race Hoss settin' ov'r yond'r in de pastur' waitin' jes' like yo' ma is terday."

"What's she waiting for?"

"Waitin' ter hyah ef Mist'r Race Hoss beat Brer Bar ter be ruler er de beastes. Oh, I tell yer Ned Dog mos' run hisse'f plum ter death gittin' votes fur Mist'r Race Hoss; an' Mist'r Wile Cat, he de haid man gittin' votes fur Brer Bar."

"But, Mammy—"

"Lawd, boy, I wush you cud heah de scand'lous bettin' gwine on in dat pastur'—ev'ybody puttin' money on Mist'r Race

Hoss, 'caze dey see Brer Bar's too slow an' sleepy mind'd ter keep up wid Mist'r Race Hoss. An' den, too, nobody doan trus' Mist'r Wile Cat fur nuthin'. Mist'r Wile Cat all time projeckin' wid some sorter big sumpin' nuth'r dat nuv'r do tu'n out ter be er thing. So yer see nobody ain' gwine vote fur Brer Bar, 'caze dey skeer'd er Mist'r Wile Cat's dealin's. Dey talks all dis out in de pastur', an' Mist'r Tom Cat he set an' lis'n ter de confab. Sometime he buse Brer Bar, an' sometime he make out he 'sleep an' doan heah.

"One day Mist'r Jack Donkey wint up ter de fod'r rack ter git er chaw er fod'r, an' whin he come thu de cow shed he come 'cross Mist'r Tom Cat stretchin' his claws. Atter dey passes howdy wid one nuth'r, Mist'r Tom Cat, he say, 'Jack, I heah some

fokes say, dey wush ter de Lawd you wus in Brer Bar's place.'

"Jack, he tu'n his ye'rs 'roun', he do, an' say, 'Who say dat, Tom?'

"Tom Cat say, 'Ev'ybody jes' wushin' fur er big sho' nuf man like you ter come in an' whoop out dat ole stuck up Race Hoss.'

"Whin Jack Donkey heah dat, he sorter switch his tail, an' stomp fus' one foot an' den de uth'rs uv his foots, an' he keep his ye'rs tu'nin' 'roun' an' 'roun'."

"What's the reason he does that, Mammy Phyllis; were the flies bothering him?" asked the little girl.

"He studyin', honey, dat sort'r confab'll wurk on men fokes, let lone er donkey. Jack sort'r tu'n matt'rs ov'r in his mine, an' he say ter hisse'f, 'I sho' is er sho' nuf big man, an' I sho' is got er heap er sense, 'caze I

kin outdo Mist'r Man up yond'r enny day. Nobody can't make me do nuthin' my mine ain' sot on doin', an' enybody kin hitch up dat high steppin' Race Hoss, an' make 'im plow er do enny sort'r thing whut dey pleases. Yas,' he says, 'I got mo' sense dan Race Hoss, an' bless de Lawd, ef I doan b'leef I'm bett'r lookin', too!'

"Mist'r Tom Cat ain' say er thing, he jes' keep er stretchin' his claws, waitin' fur Jack Donkey ter git plum full er hisse'f. Bimeby, he git full ernuf ter bile ov'r, an' he say, 'Brer Tom, I ain' much on pol'ticks, you knows dat,—but ef de plantation is jes' brow beat by dat ripsnortin' Race Hoss, an' can't git shed er him no uth'r way, 'cep'n fur some uth'r bigg'r man 'n him ter run 'ginst 'im, den I'm yer man.'

"Tom, he light out fum dar, an' make

tracks all ov'r de pastur' tell he come ter Mist'r Billy Goat's house."

"Was it Ned Dog's Billy Goat?" and Willis was contented to lay aside the harness.

"Hit wus Billy's gran'pa, ole Cap'n Goat. Cap'n Goat wus walkin' up an' down de branch washin' his foots an' takin' er swall'r er water ev'y now an' den, an' whin Tom Cat come erlong an' op'n up an' tell his biznes', de Cap'n git so 'cited, dat he stomp water all ov'r creation, an' Tom git right sharply sprinkl'd. He jump up an' shake hisse'f, he do, an' sorter start up ter de shade er de chestnut tree. Dey pass er heap er conversation, dey does, but de upshot uv hit wus, dat Cap'n Goat 'cide ter put Jack Donkey up es er dark hoss.

"Mist'r Tom Cat, he run an' tell Brer

Mule, an' Mist'r Dur'm Cow, an' Mist'r Brindle Cow, an' ole man Hog, ter run quick ter de ches'nut tree, dat Cap'n Goat's got sumpin' big ter tell 'em! Whin dey gits dar, an' passes de news back'ards an' fur'ards 'mongst derse'fs, dey 'cides ter run Jack Donkey in de race.

"Mist'r Dur'am Cow say, 'Jack's mo' stronger'n Race Hoss.'

"Ole man Hog say, 'Yas, an' he kin wurk long'r an' mo' hard'r'n Race Hoss.'

"Oh, dey praises Jack Donkey up moutily, an' all uv 'em say dey'll whup Mist'r Race Hoss so bad dat he'll be 'sham'd ter trot 'long side uv er mud turtle.

"Dey so bizzy wid der confab, dat dey ain' notice Mist'r Wile Cat settin' up on er lim' er de tree. Atter dey spies him, dey axes 'im ter pass his 'pinion on de meetin'.

"He up an' low, he did, dat he know Brer Bar ain' in de race, but, sezee, 'Jack Donkey can't do much bet'r'n Brer Bar, ef you let fokes know 'im.'

"Dey axes him how dey kin hope hit.

"He tell 'em ter run him by de name er Bline Billy.

"Dey ax 'im how he speck Bline Billy name gwine keep fokes fum knowin' Jack Donkey whin he 'pear ter make his canvas.

"Wile Cat say ter make 'im kiv'r hisse'f up whinsumev'r he rise 'fo' de congregation.

"An' dat's whut dey done, an' nobody 'cep'n dem fokes und'r de ches'nut tree know Bline Billy's sho' nuf name.

"Ned Dog, he go tell Mist'r Race Hoss 'bout dis new fine run'r dat's makin' sich fine speeches 'ginst 'im. Mist'r Race Hoss tell Ned Dog ter git der side tergeth'r so dey kin

confab erbout de mat'r. Ned Dog, he passes de wurd ter 'em all, an' he 'speshully tell Brer Mule ter be dar sho'.

"Brer Mule tell him he can't make up his min' which side he's on, he say he kin ter Bline Billy, an' he ort'r vote fur him.

"Ned Dog tell him he mustn't fergit dat him an' Mist'r Race Hoss kin, too.

"He say he ain' fergit hit, an' dat's howcum he so twist'd up 'bout votin'. He set an' study, he do, an' de mo' he study, de mo' he can't make up his mine."

"Make him vote for Mister Race Hoss, Mammy."

"Make who, boy?—Brer Mule settin' up on dat fence stud'in' jes whar Ned Dog lef' 'im."

Willis became discouraged over Mister Race Horse's prospects and insisted with

much feeling that Phyllis had influenced the animals in Jack Donkey's behalf.

"Go off, boy, how I gwine make dese trashy creeturs vote fur high tone fokes like yo' pa an' Mist'r Race Hoss? Dey dunno nuthin' 'cep'n whut de murchine tell 'em ter vote," shaking her head in condemnation and mumbling to herself. "Sometimes I studies ter m'se'f ef de wimmin fokes cud do enny bett'r."

"Mammy Phyllis, please make somebody come to Mister Race Horse's meetin'," urged Mary Van.

"Doan you both'r yose'f 'bout dat meetin', 'caze Ned Dog both'rin' nuf fur bofe uv yer. He go tell Mist'r Rooster ter telerfome ter Mist'r Turk'y Gobler, an' Mist'r Peacock, an' he tell Mist'r Bloodhoun' fur him ter run an' tell Mist'r Jersey Cow, an'—"

"An' Mister Turtle," suggested Willis, trying to help the meeting along.

"Nor, suh, ole man Mud Turtle ain' got no bisnes' at dis meetin', he 'longs wid de Bline Billy crowd. Ef you talkin' 'bout Mist'r Di'mon' Back Terrapin, den you'se right, 'caze he wus dar on de amen bench, an'—"

"Where were the sheep, Mammy?"

"Dat's so, baby, I mos' fergit all 'bout de 'spute Unk Bell Weth'r an' ole Daddy Ram Sheep had 'bout de mat'r. Daddy Ram Sheep wanter vote fur Bline Billy, but Unk Bell Weth'r say dey got ter heah mo' speakin' 'fo' dey got nuf sense ter know which one de bes' side.

"Well, de speakin' start' an' I tell yer hit kep' up scand'lus, too.

"Mist'r Race Hoss 'vite Bline Billy an'

Brer Bar bofe uv 'em ter speak wid 'im, but Brer Bar feer'd ter, an' ev'y time Jack Donkey say he gwine mix speeches wid Mist'r Race Hoss, ole Uncle Gee-Haw Steer giv' er big kick 'ginst hit.

"He say, 'Twon' do, twon' do!'

"Fin'ly Ned Dog ax Cap'n Goat ef Bline Billy skeer'd ter meet Mist'r Race Hoss on de same stump, will he 'gree ter meet 'im on diffunt stumps but tolerbul close ter-gether, so dey kin see which one kin out do de uth'r.

"Cap'n Goat say Bline Billy ain' skeer'd er no race hoss dat ev'r capr'd on er track, an' ter 'nounce de time an' name de stumps, an' Blin' Billy'll be dar wid fo' foots an' er tongue dat'll make Mist'r Race Hoss eat up all dat big talk he bin scat'rin' 'roun'.

"Whin ole Unk Gee-Haw Steer heah

'bout de meetin' he kick er 'ginst hit, he say dat donkey gwine make er jack er hisse'f sho' es sho' kin be; dat fokes'll fin' out who Bline Billy is, ef he start ter talkin' wid Mist'r Race Hoss.

"Mist'r Tom Cat say, 'Nor, Jack Donkey gwinter keep hisse'f kiv'r'd up plum tell de 'lection's ov'r.'

"Sez Unk Gee-Haw Steer, 'I wants yer all ter 'member I kick'd 'ginst hit ter de ve'y las'.'

"Oh, I tells yer dar wus mouty times gwine on gittin' reddy fur dat 'casion; de pastur' wus plum full er flags.

"Sis' Tabby Cat, she slip ov'r ter Miss Race Hosses house an' say, 'Miss Race Hoss, Mist'r Tom Cat say hit mos' kill him ter vote 'ginst Mist'r Race Hoss, but Cap'n Goat done bin sich er good frin' ter our

fambly dat Tom bleege ter do like de Cap'n ax 'im, but hit mos' killin' Tom, 'caze he say Mist'r Race Hoss is de man fur de place, an' he hope he gwine git 'lect'd.

"Miss Race Hoss ain' sayin' nuthin'. She know all 'bout Mist'r Tom Cat's doin's an' Sis' Tabby wusn't foolin' nobody but herse'f. Lawd, chillun," she mused, preparing to cut some quilt pieces, "how menny Sis' Tabby Cats is bin ter see Miss Lucy heah lately?"

"Well, de speakin' day come. Bline Billy wus settin' off on his stump all kiv'r'd up, so nobody kin tell him. Cap'n Goat settin' right close ter him whisperin' all de time, an' Brer Turkey Buzzard he swoopin' all eroun' de congergation takin' messages fur Cap'n Goat, an' pickin' up eny scrap uv vit'als he kin fine.

"Mist'r Race Hoss settin' on his stump, too, wid Jedge Eagle perch'd 'long side er him an' Ned Dog on de uth'r side.

"Mist'r Bull-finch an' John Mockin' Bird wus de lead'rs er de ban' an' I tell yer dat musick wus sumthin' ter heah sho' nuf.

"Cap'n Goat say dey doan want no musick playin' at der speakin'.

"Brer Bull Frog say: 'Nor, suhree, you git er jug-er-rum an' put hit wit Sis' Ginny Hen's boys up in de gal'ry, long wid Miss Wile Lucy Goose's chilluns, an' you got nuf fuss fur fifty meetin's.'

"Mist'r Tom Cat slap down on his leg an' say, 'Dat's de very thing; dat ef Mist'r Race Hoss git ter th'owin' off too much language, jes' ter git Brer Bull Frog ter start off de Ginny chorus an' he bet Race Hoss won't heah his own se'f talk.' "

Willis moved closer. "Was all of 'em sittin' together, Mammy?"

"Nor, dey wus fur nuf erpart fur bofe uv 'em ter keep der own crowd."

"Where did Brer Mule sit?" Mary Van remembered to ask.

"And where did Uncle Bell Weth'r take the sheep?" put in Willis.

"Brer Mule had bisnes' dat take 'im clean off'n de plantation, honey, an' dat bisnes' keep 'im plum tell 'lection day's ov'r. Yas, Lawd, an' er whole passel er yo' pa's frien's went wid him ter hope 'im ten' ter his bisnes'."

"Did Uncle Bell Weth'r and the sheep go, too?"

"Nor, son, dey jes' nachelly ain' got der mines sot yit, an' dey ain' settin' wid one nur t'other. Dey huddl'd tergeth'r right

b'twixt de two, waitin' fur Unk Bell Weth'r ter ring de bell, den all uv 'em gwine move tergeth'r.

"But youall keep er talkin' so much, Mist'r Race Hoss an' Bline Billy gittin' wo' out settin' on dem stumps."

"Tell 'em to start, Mammy."

"Dey done start, baby. Bline Billy's ginny chorus jes' er pot'rackin' hard es dey kin, 'caze Brer Bull Frog so full er jug-er-rum, dat he start 'em off too soon. Cose de gooses turn loose soon es de ginnies give de fus 'potter-rack.'

"Cap'n Goat tuk an' whisp'r ter Brer Turkey Buzz'rd ter go tell Jim Duck fur de Lawd sake ter stop de fuss, so Jack Donkey kin speak, 'caze Mist'r Race Hoss wus jes' er speakin' gran' an' gittin' way erhead; an' Cap'n Goat settin' up dar pullin' his whisk'rs

an' farely chawin' de een's off. Fin'ly Brer Turkey Buzzard whisper ter Jim Puddle Duck, but Jim Duck sorter deef an' he think Brer Buzzard say fur his fambly ter go he'p 'long de fuss. So he go, he do, an' geth'r 'em up, an' Miss Screech Owel's fokes, too, an' dey starts sich ernuth'r holl'rin' es nobody ain' nuv'r heah befo' nur sense. Cap'n Goat try ter shout out er few wurds, but nobody can' heah er wurd, so Mist'r Durham Cow raise his beller ter try ter hope him, but dat done do no good. Den Mist'r Tom Cat see ef he kin git in er wurd, but nobody wud know he wus talkin' les'n dey see his mouf wurkin'.

"Whoopee! Jack Donkey wus so mad, he hop up ter holler, too, but Mist'r Wile Cat hidin' b'hime 'im, grabs 'im by de kiv'r an' tell 'im ter set still tell dey holl'rs derse'fs

out. He say, 'Den you kin speak atter Mist'r Race Hoss gits all wo' out.' But nor suhree, dat 'vice ain' suitin' Jack Donkey, an' whut's mo', he too hard haided ter lis'n enyhow, so he up an' start ter holl'rin his 'He-haw, he-haw.'

"Whoopee! dat stop de fuss! Somebody 'gun ter holl'r: 'Bline Billy ain' nobody but ole Jack Donkey!' All uv 'em say, 'De idee er Jack Donkey puttin' hisse'f up ter be rul'r er de beastes.'

"Unk Bell Weth'r shake de bell, an' all de sheep flocks ter Mist'r Race Hoss's side.

"Oh, I tell yer dar wusn't but er han'ful er fokes lef' on Jack's side."

"Why did Jack Donkey pull his cov'r off, Mammy?"

"He didn't hatt'r pull his kiv'r off, son, caze Jack call out his own name—can't

you tell er donkey whin you heahs him bray?"

At that moment a band and shouts of people were heard coming up the street.

"Lawsee! chillun! Less git down fum heah; I b'leef in m' soul Mist'r Race Hoss done beat dis race sho' nuf."

X

MISTER BAD 'SIMMON TREE

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"Look at that big old grape tree, Mammy Phyllis," said Mary Van, as she ran beside the little boy gathering wild flowers in the woods back of the house.

"That's not a grape tree, Mary Van—it's a grape vine," corrected Willis.

" 'Tain't, it's a tree, isn't it, Mammy?"

"It's a vine," he emphasized with a shake of her arm.

"Make him stop, he's knocking my flowers."

"Dey ain't no use youall 'sputin' 'bout Miss Wile Grape. Bofe uv yer's got hit right. She uster be Miss Wile Grape Vine 'fo' she take an' marry ole man Holl'r Tree.

Now she call herse'f Miss Grape Vine Tree."

"Where's Old Man Holl'r Tree?"

"Yond'rs him,—standin' b'hime Miss Wile Grape. Dey's er heap er men fokes hidin' b'hime der ole ladies in dis worl', too! Yas, suh! an' dey's er heap uv 'ooman fokes dat act jes' like Miss Wile Grape done whin Mist'r Wise Oak tell her long time ergo ter stop keepin' comp'ny wid Holl'r Tree. Mist'r Wise Oak tell her Holl'r Tree ain' fit'n fur nuthin' but ter hide possums in.

"She say, 'I doan keer ef he can't do nuthin', I kin make er livin' fur bofe uv us, but I'm jes' bleeg ter have sumbody ter lean on.'

"He say, 'Doan git er long s' fas', Wile Grape; lay low fur er while, an' 'twon' be long 'fo' young Johnnie Live Oak'll reach out an' ax you ter lean on him.'

"She say, 'No, I ain' gwine 'ginst Holl'r Tree jes' 'caze he's gettin' ole an' ball.'

"Miss Crab Apple tell her, 'Dat's right, grab yer fus' chance, 'caze yer ain' gwina git no mo'.' Dat hu't po' lit'le Wile Grape's feelin's, an' she sorter wilt an' creep on de groun' tell Miss Bizzy Bee come an' tell her Holl'r Tree say ef she doan come on, he gwine tumble ter pieces. Den she lif' up her haid an' git Bob Win' ter take her up ter Holl'r Tree, an' she bin dar ev'r sense, tryin' ter hide his ole ugly se'f; an' de wurser he look, de mo' purty leaves an' grapes she try ter kiv'r ov'r him."

"What'd Miss Crab Apple say?" Mary Van wanted to hear the gossip.

"Nobody ain' lis'n ter whut she say, 'caze she so sour an' mean, ev'ybody keep out'n her way."

Willis darted ahead. "Look, Mammy, look at the persimmons!" and he began hurling stones towards the tree.

"Nobody doan want no green 'simmons, boy."

"They're not green, they're yellow," and another stone followed.

"Let dem 'simmons 'lone, I tell yer—dey ain' fit'n fur nothin', doan keer ef dey is yaller. De fros' got ter fall on 'em 'fo' eb'n possums'll eat 'em." She added, under her breath, "Like dese heah sour fokes dat don't nuv'r git sweet tell trub'le hit 'em."

"I don't care, I'm going to knock 'em down anyway."

"Ahah, you gwine be hard-haid'd jes' like 'Simmon Tree wus whin he wus er lit'le hard-haid'd boy tree, an' his ma tell him ter stop sassyin' old fokes."

"Who did he sassy?" Willis looked with indecision at the stone in his hand.

"I ain' gwine tell yer nuthin' tell yer th'ows dat rock down an' gits fur nuf fum 'Simmon Tree ter keep him fum lis'nin' ter whut I says, 'caze he 'memb'rs long time ergo whin all de trees wus waitin' ter see which one gwine have de fines' crap er chillun. Early hyah in de spring, 'fo' Jack Fros' go ter see Miss White Snow, Dandy Lion come peepin' out; all de trees bowin' an' swingin' derse'fs erbout axin' de news 'bout der chillun. Dandy Lion say, 'Don't yer heah lit'le Weepin' Will'r cryin' an' holl'rin' ov'r yond'r now?' Sho' nuf dar she wus tellin' her ma 'bout lit'le Maple Tree an' all uv 'em pushin' her out fus' ter see ef Jack Fros' fixin' ter pack his trunk."

The stone slid noiselessly from Willis's

hand, while Phyllis led the way beyond the green persimmons.

"Did Jack Frost bite little Willow Tree?"

"He don't bite 'em less'n dey gits hard-haid'd an' sassy him. But hyah come lit'le Aspin, an' lit'le Sugar Maple, an' dey says Lit'le 'Simmon Tree an' de res' uv de tree chillun is reddy ter come, soon es ole Unk' Sun warm up de room fur 'em er lit'le. Bimeby, all uv 'em gits der haids an' hands out, 'cep'n Pine Tree chile. Ev'ybody axin' Miss Vilet, an' Miss Honey-suckle an' all uv 'em wharbouts Pine Tree chile wus at. Pres-'ntly ole Tall Pine say, he do: 'Jes' 'ten' ter yer own biznes', my boy know whut he doin'. He ain' gwine come up hyah rippin' an' tar'in' 'roun', an' den hatt'r stan' dar an' die in his tracks. Whin enny er my fambly

comes up in de woods, dey comes ter stay,' sez he: 'De res' er you all goes off in de winter time, but me an' my fokes stays right hyah; darfo', I done lernt my chillun ter git er good start 'fo' dey comes thu!'

"I tell yer, Pine Tree chile wus workin' hard ter tap wat'r so he kin keep up wid de res' er de trees atter he jines de woods."

"How can he tap water?" interrupted Willis.

"Dey taps hit wid der roots. Sometimes er pine tree whut ain't no big'r'n my han' is got roots fifteen foots long. An' I tell yer Pine Tree tellin' de trufe, his boy know der fambly bleege ter have wat'r ter live on, an' he ain't gwine take no stan' in dis woel he know he can't keep up wid. De trees dey talks 'bout him mouty bad at fus', but he don't pay no 'tenshun ter 'em, he jes' mine

his own biznes', an' bimeby he git big 'nuf ter look on de top uv all 'em."

"Did he look down on the top of Mist'r Wise Oak?" broke in Willis.

"Tall Pine so high an' straight hisse'f, he ain't thinkin' 'bout de top er nobody's haid. He know Mist'r Wise Oak's de big'es' man on Tinker Knob an' he proud ter keep comp'ny wid him."

"Who was running against Wise Oak?" the race for mayor still lingering in his mind.

"Well, son, dar wus er heap uv 'em dat want ter git in, but dey can't git nobody ter put 'em up. Lombody Poplar ax Holl'r Tree ter put him up, but Holl'r Tree tell him ter look at hisse'f, an' see how fokes 'ud t'ar him ter pieces. He say he dunno howcum.

"Holl'r Tree say, 'Whut's you done ter

make fokes vote fur you? You doan give no fruit, an' you too stingy ter eb'n stretch yer arms out an' make shade fur ennybody.'

"Lombody say, 'Yer doan want me ter spile m' shape does yer?'

"Holl'r Tree say, 'Dat's hit. You thinks too much 'bout yer own se'f ter serve de woods.' But I ain' got time ter tell yer all whut de trees talks erbout. I jes' wanter tell yer 'bout whut Mist'r bad 'Simmon Tree got.

"Whin he wus er lit'le boy tree, he all de time bein' hard-haided an' makin' fusses twixt de trees er de beastes er enybody dat 'ud lis'n ter him. His ma whoop him er heap 'bout tellin' tales, an' meddlin' in fokes' 'fars, but ev'y time Bob Win' come thu de woods 'Simmon Tree'd lean way down ter de groun' totin' tales ter sumbody. One time Mist'r Brindle Cow come walkin'

long thu de woods, huntin' fur some nice lit'le chaws er wile flow'rs, an' 'Simmon Tree hol'r fur him ter come set down an' talk ter him. Mister Brindle say he ain' got no time ter fool wid chillun. Wid dat 'Simmon Tree holl'r back: 'Yer bet'r take time, 'caze ev'y body know you done bin runn'd out'n de pastur'.' Whoopee! Mist'r Brindle Cow give er jump an' lan' hisse'f 'pon top er dat sassy little tree, an' I tell yer he nuv'r lef' dar tell he had tromp 'Simmon Tree clean down ter de groun'. Den he curl his tail in de air an' go bellerin' back ter de pastur'.

" 'Simmon Tree sorter raise up one fing'r, den he lif' his haid up er lit'le bit, but he hurt so bad near 'bout his foots dat he cry an' beg sumbody ter please hope him up.

"Jes' den Mist'r Man an' his lit'le boy

come ridin' thu dar on Miss Race Hoss. Mist'r Man stop, he do, an' say, 'Look at dat nice lit'le 'Simmon Tree sumbody done tromp'd down. I'm gwine tie hit up an' give hit er chanct,' sez he. So him an' de lit'le boy liftes hit up, an' 'Simmon Tree holl'r, 'Oh! Lawdy! yer's killin' me,' but dey ties him up an' put sticks up 'ginst him ter keep him fum fallin' down, an' 'tain' long 'fo' de hu't part wus kur'd tergeth'r fine, an', by de time he wus grow'd up, nobody cud tell he ev'r wus er bad lit'le boy dat mos' got kilt by his badness. Oh, he wus er starchy lookin' tree I tell yer. Look like he wus de fines' lookin' uv all de tree chillun."

"One day Bob Win' put on his fine linnin duster an' he come er projeckin' an' frolickin' 'roun' de Reed gals down in de Cane Break. Dey has er heap er fun, I tell

yer. Bob allus crackin' his jokes ter 'em tell dey mos' die fallin' 'ginst one nuth'r laffin'.

" 'Simmon Tree git so mad 'caze he can't fly 'roun' an' projeck wid de gals like Bob, dat he 'fuse ter speak ter Bob's howdy. Bob he sorter laf an' flutt'r 'Simmon Tree's leaves back'ards. 'Simmon Tree git mad es fire den, an' he tell him ter 'clar out!'

"He say, 'You does er heap er braggin' an' blusterin' in dese parts Bob Win', but I ain' nuv'r seed nuthin' in yer but bad mann'rs.'

"Bob say, 'I see yer done forgit de les'n Brer Brindle Cow learnt yer whin you wus lit'le.'

" 'Simmon Tree say, 'I ain' skeer'd er all de Mist'r Cows in de pastur', an' you th'ow'd in ter boot. You ain' nuthin' but er win' bag ennyhow.'

"Bob Win' say, 'Git reddy, suh, we gwine proof whose de bes' man 'fo' sundown.'

"Bob go ax his pa, ole man Harricane, ter loan him his cyarpet bag, he tell him he want ter take sum fightin' close 'long on er trip he gwine on thu de woods. Ole Kerlum-bang Thunder say he gwine 'long ter see de fun. Po'-Down Rain say he gwine too, but Bob tell 'em he doan want nobody ter hope him.

"Po'-Down Rain says he ain' gwine hope nobody, he say, 'Mist'r Wise Oak sont fur me er mont' ergo, an' I ain' had time ter go yit, but I'm gwine now, 'caze I wants ter see you whin you tu'ns yose'f loose.'

"Ole Kerlum-bang Thund'r say, 'I ain' gwine hu't nobody, I'm jes' gwina shoot off er few fier wurks, an' rat'le 'roun' er lit'le.'

"Bob see he can' do nuthin' wid 'em, so he

start off. Fus' he come sorter sof' whrrrrrrrr, whuuuuuuuu. All de trees lafs an' howdy's ter one nuth'r 'cep' 'Simmon Tree. He 'fuse ter russ'le so much es er leaf. Bob come Brrrrrrrrr, sorter strong like, de leaves on de groun' try ter hop up an' cap'r wid dem on de trees, an' de Reed gals wus jes' laffin' an' th'owin' derse'fs erbout scand'lous. 'Simmon Tree ain' flutt'r er leaf, 'cep'n whin he bleeg'd ter. Bob Win' come Brrrrrrrr, Whrrrrrrrr, Brrrrr, Brrrrrrrr, Whrrrrrr, Zuzuzuzuzuzuzuzuzuzuzuzuzuzzzzzzzzzz, whoopee! I tell yer he's comin' now! He rip an' t'ar, he do, ringin' an' twistin' ev'ything dat gits in his way. Ole Kerlum-bang Thunder give er clap an' tetch off er fier crack'r dat skeer de Cane Break fokes mouty nigh ter death. Po'-Down Rain come right 'long b'hime him.

He wet dem woods mouty nigh ter flood times. Ole Kerlum-bang drop his chunk er fier on a passel er big fier-crackers, an'—"

"And Roman candles, and sky rockets!" added Willis.

"Yas, an' de fus' thing you knows Bob Win' had done swep' up dat groun' b'fo' him clean es yo' ma's parler floor. He step up ter 'Simmon Tree an' ax him ef he got ennything ter take back.

" 'Simmon Tree say, 'I done tole yer I ain' gwina pass wurds wid no sich er blow hard es you is.'

"Bob Win' grab him 'roun 'de trunk, he do, an' give er good twis' on his haid, but dat nuv'r done no harm, an' 'Simmon Tree hit him back es good es he sen'. Bob take him by de arms an' twis' wid all his might, but 'Simmon Tree laff in his face, an' twis' back

at him. Den Bob give er runnin' jump an' wrop hisse'f 'long 'bout 'Simmon's foots. Well, suh, dat een' de fight. Bob hit him in de weak part, an' 'Simmon Tree broke an' come, kerblum', an' splint'r'd hisse'f all ov'r de groun'."

"Mammy, I thought you said Mister Man cured him, so he was bigger and stronger than all of the rest?" Mary Van had a good memory but Phyllis was ever ready to answer the interruption.

"Aha, aha, you 'members dat does yer? An' dat's jes' whut he wus—mo' finer'n all uv 'em 'cep'n in dat weak place his hard haid make, whin he wus er lit'le bit'r tree. An' er gal er boy"—she looked earnestly into each face—"kin be sassy an' hard-haid'd whin dey's lit'le, an' whin dey gits grow'd up an' 'gins ter rass'lin' wid triberlations, de

ve'y fus' fight dey gits in, dat weak bad, hard-haided place gwine give way fus', an' dey'll splinter all ter pieces jes' like 'Simmon Tree done."

"Can Bob Wind whip all the trees?"

"He sho' kin, son, dat is, enny uv 'em dat's so big'rty an' hard-haid'd dey can't lis'n ter nobody. I tell yer dar's er plenty er Bob Win's ter whoop all de biggerty hard-haids 'mongst de men fokes, too."

"I bet there isn't any Bob Wind that can whip my papa."

"No, my Lawd, dat dey ain't," she laughed softly, then added: "Howcum you reck'n yo' pa come ter be sich er big man?" she stopped to hear his answer.

"Cause he's my papa," defended the child.

" 'Tain't no sich er thing. Plenty fokes gots papa's 'sides you. Hit's 'caze he

got de bignes' ter mine whut his ole lady say ter him ev'y onct in erwhile. Come 'long, we ain' gwine git er Lawd's bit er dinn'r ef we doan git out er dese hyah woods."

XI

BIG EYE BUZZARD

BIG EYE BUZZARD

"Mammy, less go up to Jim Weed's house, he's going to give me one of his buzzard eggs." Willis was halfway to the gate.

"Come back hyah, boy,—I ain' gwine stirry er step fum dis hyah tree tell I churns dis milk fur Kitty, an' ennyhow yond'r come comp'ny ter see yer," she nodded towards Mary Van, who was tip-toeing to unfasten the gate.

" 'Tain't anybody but Mary Van, and she can go, too."

"Where, Willis?" and the little girl ran past him to the joggling board * near Phyllis; "Put me up, Mammy!"

* Joggling-board.—A long, springy board about three

Phyllis dropped the churn top in place and went to the assistance of Mary Van. "Come on, son," she called over her shoulder, "an' let dem buzzard aigs hatch right whar dey is, 'caze de Lawd knows dey's in de right nes'."

"Jim Weed's er nice boy," resented Willis, refusing to come.

"He ain' nuthin' but po' white trash." She stood with her arms akimbo, waiting to lift him beside Mary Van. "Come on, an' hole Ma'y Van's han' so bofe uv yer kin stay on de bo'rd whin yer joggles."

"He's not poor white trash," exclaimed Willis hotly, "he's got a pigeon house, and a dog house, and a bird house, and a—"

feet from the ground, made fast at each end, and so arranged that children may jump up and down, or joggle on it.

"I doan keer how minny houses he got, an' I doan keer how much money he got neeth'r —he ain' nuthin' in dis woel but po' trash," she announced with a sweeping bow, then added to Mary Van, as she returned to the churn: "Set down on de bo'rd, honey, tell Willis git reddy ter stan' up an' jump wid you. He bleege ter cool off er while, fus', 'cose he know trashy fokes got ter keep on bein' trashy, jes' like he know dat buzzard aig bleege ter hatch out er buzzard; doan keer ef you puts hit in Lilly Dove's nes' er way up yond'r in Jedge Eagle's nes', hit's boun' ter be er buzzard dat pips dat aig shell."

Swishing the dasher up and down in the churn, she continued addressing herself to Mary Van.

"Yas, Lawd, yer orter heah ole man Turkey Buzzard tell 'bout whin his boy, Big

Eye, turn hisse'f ter er eagle. Big Eye tell his pa he ti'ed soshatin' wid de low down buzzards dat lives on Dead Man's Mountain, an' he done make up his min' ter greeze his feath'rs an' shave de top er his haid like de ball eagle, an' move ov'r ter Tinker Knob whar de fus' class birds lives at."

"Mammy, I thought buzzards were bald anyhow," said Willis coming a step or two nearer.

" 'Cose dey bin ball ev'r sense Big Eye shave his haid.

"His pa say, 'Doan yer know soon es fokes heahs yer name, dey kin p'int out yer fambly?'

"He tell his pa he gwine change his name ter Mist'r Mount'n Fowel, an' tell de fokes he's kin ter Jedge Eagle's fambly, so he kin git vit'd ter de fine parties.

"His pa say, 'Fokes kin tell yo' buzzard lope' soon es you starts ter dancin'.'

"He say he ain' gwine dance no 'buzzard lope,' dat he gwine 'cut de pigeon wing.'

"His ma ax him, 'Whatchu gwine do 'bout marryin' yo' cousin Ashy Car'on Crow?'

"He say he done fergit all 'bout dat ole black, warty head'd crow, dat he gwine marry Miss Tishy Peafowel.

"His pa tell him he dunno nuthin' tall erbout dis new fangled way er doin', dat he allus heahs de ole fokes say birds bett'r stick ter der own fe'th'r.

"He stan' up an' sass his pa scan'lous, an' say jes' 'caze his fambly wus buzzards, dat ain' no rees'n fur him ter be one. He say he mo' finer lookin' dan dem. 'In fack,' sez he, 'I'm jes' like dem Eagle boys, an' I'm gwine pass off fur one de fambly, too.'

"Ole lady Buzzard cry an' beg him ter stay at home; she say ef he jes' make er man er hisse'f, he kin be de bigges' buzzard on Dead Man.

"He pat his ma on de back, an' laf' sorter gran' like an' say, ''Ooman fokes ain' got 'nuf sense ter 'vise in men fokes 'fars.' Den he flop his wings an' come flyin' 'zackly like dem Eagle boys flies.

"Whin de birds on Tink'r seed him comin', dey 'gun ter pass jedgement 'bout who hit mout be. Sum says hit's one, sum says hit's ernuth'r, but all uv 'em says one thing dey knows fur sartin an' sho,—'Tain' no ole buzzard."

Willis had come slowly, step by step, until he had climbed up by Mary Van, on the joggling board.

"Big Eye Buzzard sorter circle 'roun'

lookin' fur er good place ter light. Bimeby, he see Doct'r Peckerwood lancin' er bile on one dese tall Pine trees, an' he start circlin' 'roun' de Pine tree. Atter while heah he come an' light on de ve'y top'es lim'. Doct'r Peckerwood howdy sorter short ter him, 'caze he bizzy tryin' ter keep de Pine tree fum moanin' ov'r de bile, but er lit'le thing like dat doan both'r Big Eye, he up an' spon', 'I'm feelin' poly m'se'f, an' I stop ter git sum med'cine, an' ax Mist'r Tall Pine ef he kin spar' me er room.'

"Doct'r Peckerwood ax him wharbouts he hu't, an' wharbouts he come fum, an' what's his name, an' whut he bin eatin'? Yer see Doct'r Peckerwood want ter git sum news 'long wid de symptoms.

"Big Eye say, 'I'm tendin' ter sum biznes' fur m' Unkle Jedge Eagle, an' I ain' eat

nuthin' sense I lef' Mill Mount'in, whar de Eagleses lives at.'

"Doct'r Peck'rwood say, 'Surt'n'ly he heah fokes tell 'bout de great Jedge Eagle, an' fur him ter stay right dar tell he git good an' well, 'caze he know Mist'r Pine Tree ain' nuv'r had one er de Eagle fambly at his house b'fo'.'

"Tall Pine say, 'I'm pow'ful po'ly m'sef, but hit 'ud make me proud ef yer kin make yerse'f comf'bul, an' stay.'

"Oh, I tell yer, dem Tree Frogs an' Lizzarts 'buse Mist'r Mount'in Fowel scan'lous. Dey sez he keep 'em runnin' ev'y which er way all de time, an' he ain' give 'em so much es er ole par er shoes.

"Doct'r Peck'rwood g'long ov'r ter Miss Chicken Hawkes's ter give one de chillun er dost er cast'r oil, an' he tell 'em dat de

gentmun dey seed wus Mist'r Mount'in Fowel, an' he wus kin ter Jedge Eagle. An' Polly Parret wus spindin' de day wid Miss Chickin Hawk dat day, an' whin de Doct'r g'long off, An' Polly make Miss Chicken Hawk fix up er nice chickin fur her ter car'y up ter Big Eye. Miss Chickin Hawk want one er her gals ter take de chickin, but An' Polly say dey too young ter be projickin' 'roun' whar gentmuns is at, but hit doan make no diffunce 'bout er ole maid like her. Well, she car'd de chickin, an' she brung back de news.—Big Eye stuff her so full, dat she can' hardly fly wid hit. She come ter Miss Magpie's house, an' I tell yer dey wus jes' waitin' fur her. Dey runs out ter meet her, an' she bile ov'r 'fo' she git in de house, an' 'fo' she git plum th'u, dem Magpie gals had done put on der fine close, an' wus totin'

dat news 'roun' like er gun wus b'hime 'em. Fokes sont him fine vit'als ter eat, an' say soon es he git so es ter be erbout, dey gwine 'vite him ter some parties.

"All dis time, Big Eye settin' up on dat lim' gorgin' hisse'f wid der fine vit'als, an' mos' killin' hisse'f laffin' 'bout how fokes loves ter be fool'd. He know hits 'bout time fur him ter be gittin' well, an' he set an' studdy how he gwine git de money ter keep up wid de hifalutin' a'rs dese fine fokes puts on. Long 'bout dat time, Sis' Cow's cousin take an' die. Dey keeps her out er day er two, 'caze dey fixin' ter have er fine fun'al. Big Eye git well soon es he heah 'bout dat dead cow. He flop his wings an' fly back ter Dead Man's Mount'in, an' tell de buzzards he got er fine piece er meat ter sell 'em cheap. Dey barg'ins right den an' dar

"BIMEBY HE GIT AX 'D TER BE ER PAWL B'ARER TER ALL UV 'EM."

fur all de dead an'mals on Tink'r, an' Big Eye sign de corntrack part, ef dey promise dey nuv'r is ter come on Tink'r ter git 'em, 'cep'n on de dark er de moon."

"Let 'em come in the daytime, Mammy, they can't see in the dark," suggested Willis.

"Big Eye know dey'd run him clean off'n Tinker Knob ef dem fokes see he git his livin' off'n der mis'ry. Nex' day hyah he come flyin' back wid er big bunch er fun'al flow'rs wid ribbin streamers flyin' ev'y which er way. Fokes wint ter de fun'al jes' ter see de flow'rs. Ev'ybody talkin' 'bout de gran'nes' er Mist'r Mount'in Fowel, an' how he 'tend all de berryin's, doan keer who 'tis. An' bimeby he git ax'd ter be er pawl b'arer ter all uv 'em.

"Miss Chickin Hawk give er party long 'bout den, an' Big Eye he act mouty nice ter

her gals, tell Mist'r Turkey Gobl'r 'vite him ter his house, den he fergit he ev'r heah tell er de Chicken Hawkeses. He runnin' ev'y minite ter Mist'r Turkey Gobl'rs house, makin' like he wus dancin' 'tendance on Mandy Gobl'r, an' all he wanter do is ter git er peep at Tishy Peafowel dat live nex' do'. Oh, I tell yer he talk purty talk ter Mandy, but he cas' dem sheep eyes at Tish. Bimeby, Mandy, she pass Big Eye de 'quaintance uv Tishy ov'r de fence, an' hit 'tain't long 'fo' Big Eye gits er invite ov'r ter Majer Peafowel's. Whin dat hap'n, hit look like he done fergit wharbouts Mandy live, an' po' Mandy she look out de wind'r an' see Big Eye an' Tishy sashain' in de yard, lovin' harder'n er mule kin kick.

"Majer Peafowel say he want Tishy ter mar'y Johnny Squinch Owel, 'caze he's de

bigges' lawyer on Tinker. But Tishy say he too ugly ter look at, let lone ter mar'y.

"Johnny Squinch ain' sayin' nuthin', he jes' keepin' er lookout fur Big Eye. He see Big Eye go out sumwhars ev'y dark er de moon, an' he low he gwine fol'r 'im an' see whut he do. 'Caze yer knows de dark'r hit gits, de bet'rer Squinch Owels kin see."

"How can he see in the dark?"

"I dunno how 'tis, Ma'y Van, but de Lawd fixes owels eyes so dey kin 'ten' ter der night biznes', an' whin fokes gits ter lovin' an' gits in er tight place like Johnny Squinch wus, de Lawd fixes der eyes so dey kin see th'u de dark an' ev'y which er way, too. One night on de dark er de moon, Big Eye start out ter meet de buzzards. He got fo' hosses, an' two cows, an' er pass'l er birds. Big Eye, he wus jes' er takin' in de money I tell

yer. He can't see hit, but he kin feel uv hit, an' he know dey darsn't ter cheat him. But Johnny Squinch settin' up on er lim' jes' ov'r his haid,—he kin count de money, yassuh, ev'y cent uv hit, too. Dey ain' no eyes kin see like Johnny Squinch's, 'speshally whin dey's lovin'. De nex' day, Majer Peafowel fly up ter Pine Tree Holl'r ter see Mist'r Mount'in Fowel 'bout whut Johnny tell him."

"Mammy, could Major Peafowl fly up to the top of Mister Tall Pine?" asked Mary Van in amazement.

"Who sed he fly up ter de top? I sed he wint up ter de Pine Tree Holl'r. De Majer ain' gwine bus' in nobody's room les'n he sen' his cyard up fus',—an' how you know dey ain' got one dem ellumvat'rs like de new hotel got?"

"Oh!" apologetically, she exclaimed.

Phyllis continued, "Whin de Majer ax him 'bout las' night's biznes', Big Eye look him straight in de eye an' bus' out laffin', like hit wus de bes' joke he ev'r heah. He say he wush ter de Lawd he had er know'd Johnny Squinch wus dar, 'caze he nuv'r wud er bin helt up by dem night rob'rs. He tell him, 'cose he wus countin' money, but hit wus de money de Jedge give 'im, an' he say he bleege ter count hit out fur de rob'rs, 'caze dey helt er pist'l in his ribs.

"De Majer brung de news home ter Tishy, an' she say Johnny jes' tellin' tales on Mount'in Fowel, but Johnny tell her Mount'in Fowel ain' nuthin' but er big ole low down buzzard, an' he gwine proof hit ter her.

"De Majer say ef Mount'in Fowel dealin' in car'on, howcum hit dat de od'r er his

biznes' ain' stickin' ter him, dat he allus mighty sweet wid colone whin he come ter der house.

"Johnny say he too smart ter tech hit hisse'f, dat he set way off fum hit an' jes' tetches de money.

"Majer dunno which ter b'leef. Tishy car'in on so, busin' one an' lovin' t'other, dat he make up his mine he gwine lay er trap an' see ef Big Eye 'ud fall in hit. Long 'bout dis time, Big Eye 'gun ter long fur de vit'als he bin rais'd on, an' ev'y time he set an' sell dem dead an'mals ter de buzzards, his mouf dribble so dat he 'termine he gwine tas'e er lit'le ef hit kills him. He done hit too, an' whut's mo' hit tas'e so good, he tas'e hit ergin, an' whut's mo' en dat, he slip out ev'y night an' take er good bate er car'on. Fus' thing yer know, his colone nur his fine

doin's neeth'r can' hide dat sumthin' wus pow'ful wrong wid him. Tishy jes' cry an' cry, an' say she doan see nuthin' wrong wid him, dat hits jes' ev'ybody jellus uv 'im. Oh, she tuk on pow'ful. Johnny Squinch an' Brer Brindle Cow dey confabs er while jes 'fo' de moon git dark ergin, an' de upshot uv hit wus dat Brer Brindle g'long ter de fur een' er de pastur' an' drap hisse'f down like he done fell dead. Den he lay dar. Big Eye seen him whin he fall, an' hit look like ter him dark nuv'r wud come. Johnny an' de Majer settin' b'hime de fence waitin' ter see whut gwine hap'n."

"What did happen, Mammy Phyllis?" asked Mary Van.

"Hit hap'n dat Big Eye's *buzzard-side* grow'd fast'r dan his hifalutin'-side, fur 'fo' dark come, he put out ter git some nice lit'le

pickin's off'n Brer Brindle, 'fo' de fun'l."

"Did Johnny and the Major catch him?" asked Willis.

"Ketch him, boy? You jes' orter seed Big Eye whin Brer Brindle rise up an' say: '*cl'ar out*,' an' he cl'ar clean out too, fur nobody ain' nuv'r seed er buzzard on Tinker Knob sense.

"Lawsee, Johnny Squinch's lawyer sense done hit. He say, 'jes watch whar de car'on lays at, ef you tryin' ter ketch er buzzard.' " Then turning a warning look to Willis, "An' you 'mem'r no buzzard ev'r turn hisse'f ter er Eagle in dis woel; an' you let dat Weed boy an' his buzzard aigs erlone, yer heah me?"

"Yes'm," he answered meekly, then forgetful of Mary Van, he jumped suddenly

from the joggling board and asked, "What did Tishy do?"

Mary Van fell off. Phyllis hurried to see if she was hurt, and replied, as she put her dress to rights, "Tishy was upsot, jes' like Ma'y Van is now, 'cep'in mo' so."

XII

MISS LILLY DOVE

MISS LILLY DOVE

"Mammy, look at Tishy Peafowl in Mary Van's yard." Willis pointed across the street to a peacock in full expression of his feathered pride.

Phyllis went to the window and exclaimed, "You sho'ly ain' callin' Majer Peafowl, dat ugly ole Tishy?"

"You said Tishy was fine and pretty," reminded Mary Van.

"She wus, tell Mist'r Mount'in Fowel tu'n out ter be nobody but er ole low down buzzard. I tell yer dat gal act so scand'lous dat all her purty feath'rs start ter drappin' out, 'caze she act so ugly on de inside, dey

wusn't nuthin' ter hole de purty on de outside."

"Did all her pretty feathers drop out sho' nuf?" asked the little girl, much concerned.

"Dey ain' all drap out yit, 'caze she ain' loss all her inside purty yit."

"What's Major Peafowel doing?"

"He jes' stan'in' up dar watchin' dat fier on Tinker, an' wushin' hit 'ud bu'n up Lilly Dove's house."

Immediately the children became interested in watching the forest fire which enveloped a part of Tinker Knob.

"Did Lilly's house burn down?" asked Mary Van with feeling.

"Bu'n up er holy Ghos' bird's house?" exclaimed Phyllis. "Why, gal, dat's de bird de Holy Ghos' sen's, an' exsen's 'pon, whinsomev'r hit come down 'pon de earf! Jes'

like Jay burds is Satan's burds,—fokes says dey goes ter de Bad Place ev'y Friday night, an' I 'speck dey sees er heap er fokes useter live heah too."

"Mammy, I'm skeered God don't know the mountain's on fire," said Willis anxiously.

"Go off, boy, de Lawd ain' needin' you ter hope him 'ten' ter His biznes'—now ef dat wus er Jay burd, hit wud er bin burnt clean up, but bein's hit's er Holy Ghos' dove, dat hope ole man Noah ter lan' de Ark, de Lawd ain' gwine let her swing er feath'r. Dis hyah ain' de fus' time Lilly Dove put her trus' in de Lawd. Dat hit 'tain't," as she took from the floor the book of Robin Redbreast, "an' dis hyah Cock Robin," placing her finger on the picture, "is de ve'y man dat start all de fracus."

"Didn't Robin like Lilly Dove?" Willis left the window to look at the book.

"Him an' Ginny Wren near 'bout foolish 'bout Lilly Dove—dat's howcum Tishy Peafowel ter tu'n 'ginst Lilly like she done."

Mary Van went over to Willis, and together they spread the book upon the floor where the gay-colored pictures of the birds accentuated the feathered characters of Phyllis's mind.

"Tishy Peafowel nev'r wud er got so mean, ef An' Polly Parrit had er mine her own biznes',—'stid er dat, An' Polly ax Cock Robin whut ail Tishy feath'rs. Robin tell her Tishy ain' got no sense, dat ef she had much sense es Lilly Dove got, she nuv'r wud er bin in de fix she in now.—Whoopee! dat start de fracus.

"An' Polly start right fum dar an' spen'

de day wid ev'rybody in de woods—she mixin' de 'pinions fokes got er Tishy an' Lilly. Atter she git bustin' full er news, hyah she come ter spen' de day wid Tishy. Whin ole Lady Peafowel see An' Polly take off her bonnet ter spen' de day, she run an' git out de bes' china, an' she tell de cook ter have fried chick'n fur din'r 'caze she know An' Polly gwine tell all erbout whut dey eats ter de nex' place she go."

She paused to lift a table near the window, when Willis called from the floor:

"Mammy, don't let Aunt Polly have fried chicken for dinner."

"You sho'ly done los' yo' senses, boy. Ole lady Peafowel jes' es skeered er An' Polly es yo' ma is er Miss Tilly Totenews. —'Cose she gwine have fried chick'n an' mo' b'sides,—an' she doan let none de

chillun do no talkin' whar An' Polly's at neeth'r," she giggled.

The children needed no further description of Aunt Polly, for they knew a visit from Miss Tilly meant their banishment, as well as the strictest injunction to yea, yea, nay, nay, whenever they chanced to meet her.

"Yas, suh," she unfolded her quilt pieces and prepared to assort them on the table, "An' Polly talk er nuf wurds ter Tishy dat day ter set her plum on fier wid madnes'. Yer see mos' all Tishy's purty feath'rs wus out, an' dem whut's lef' wus right loose an' straggly, an' dat make Tishy wusser. Yer see trubble done make Tishy so sour an' mean dat she hate ev'rybody dat's purty'r'n her—an' she hate Lilly wusser en all uv 'em, 'caze Lilly wus so kine, an' treat fokes so

sweet, dat ev'rybody jes' nachelly love Lilly.

"Long 'bout dis time, de church fixin' ter have er sociable. Dey gwine have speakin' pieces, an' singin' jes' like fokes has. John Mockin'bird, he de haid man. 'Cose John wus lovin' Lilly, an' 'cose he want Lilly ter sing er chune er do sump'in, but Lilly say she bleege ter him fur axin' her, but de Lawd nuv'r make her ter sing like Laura Nightingale, an' 'tain' no use er her tryin' ter do hit. I tell yer Lilly had er heap er sense—an' er heap er beaux, too; dar wus John Mockin'-bird, an' Tom Jay Bird, an' Bob White, an' mo' b'sides. But she ain' keer nuthin' fur none uv 'em 'cep'in' John."

"Mammy, did Lilly Dove know Tom Jay Bird went to the Bad Place every Friday night?" Willis went over and stood by the table.

" 'Cose she heah tell erbout hit, 'caze An' Polly Parrit done spen' de day wid her on de subjec', but Lilly, she sot right still tell An' Polly git th'u busin' him, an' callin' him low down gambl'r—den Lilly she up an' ax, 'An' Polly does you recoleck whin you wus shet up in dat cage up at Mist'r Man's house?' An' Polly say she nuv'r is ter fergit hit. Lilly say, 'Does yer 'memb'r whin Tom Jay ust'r fotch yer all dem fat wurms?' An' Polly say she know Tom's er good feller, but she jes' tellin' whut *fokes sez.*

"Yas, suh, Tom wus er good feller, but we got ter git back ter de sociable, er dem fokes git ti'ed er waitin'."

Willis's foot accidentally upset the quilt basket. "Take yer foot out'n Mammy's bask't, an' g'long back an' look at de pictur's wid Ma'y Van."

"No, I won't—I'm tired sitting down on the floor."

"Dat's jes' de way Tishy Peafowel talk whin her ma beg her ter stay at home wid dem loose straggly feath'rs er he'rn, but Tishy say, 'No, I won't,' jes' like you talks ter me sometimes. Jes' den one her purty feath'rs drap out."

"Well, Mammy, I do want to stand up," he added apologetically, "and we've looked at all the pictures in that book."

She found another book of birds which she opened on the table.

"Hyah, stan' up an' look at dese,—dar's Tishy de ve'y fus' one."

Mary Van was soon beside him:

"Ain't Tishy pretty, Mammy Phyllis?" she said.

"She sho' wus sumthin' ter look at 'fo' Big

Eye Buzzard come erlong. An' Tishy wus er good gal, too, but she nuv'r had nuf' 'ligion ter stan' trubble."

"Did her mama let her go down town?"

"Tishy done got so mean, her ma can' do nuthin' wid her. She tell her ma she gwine ter see how John Mockin'bird gittin' 'long wid de sociable." She added with a confidential air: "Tishy want ter act in de sociable, an' she wanter give John er chanct ter ax her.

"Oh, I tell yer John have er heap er trubble wid de diffunt kine er fokes ov'r dat sociable. Dar wus de Sparrer fambly dat yer can' keep out no way yer fixes hit, dey'll eb'n git ter parties whar nobody don't want 'em an' den act like dey wus de bigges' fokes ax'd."

"How, Mammy?" Mary Van thought of

her own birthday party where she had excluded Jim Weed.

"Oh, dey does like Miss Bizzy Sparrer done Lilly Dove whin she give er party one time. Miss Bizzy meet Lilly in de poplar tree an' say:

" 'I heah yer 'bout ter give er party, Miss Lilly, an' I jes' wanter ax yer ef we got enything yer kin use?'

"Lilly, she thank her an' tu'n de subjec', but Bizzy she git back on ter hit ergin an' say:

" 'Ain't dey sumpin' I kin do? Lemme hope yer.'

"Lilly say she doan need nobody ter do nuthin', but she kin come ter de party ef she's er mine ter.

"An' Bizzy come, too, an' whut's mo', her bruth'r hafter come ter bring her, an' whut's

mo'en dat, her sist'r can't stay at home by herse'f. Yas, Lawd, an' 'fo' enybody know how dey got dar, de place wus right full er Sparrers."

"Mammy, did John ask Tishy to act in the sociable?" began Willis.

"I'm gwine tell yer now 'bout whin she start ter see John, she come up wid An' Polly. She ax An' Polly ef she know wharbouts John is. An' Polly say, John gone clean ov'r ter de Peaks er Otter ter git some flow'rs fer Lilly ter w'ar ter de sociable.

"Tishy say, 'Yas, I speck Lilly Dove gwine be tryin' ter do all de singin' an' de speakin', too.'

"An' Polly say, ''Cose John gwine sing wid her ter keep fokes fum laffin'.' Tishy git so mad 'caze she can't see John dat she flounce herse'f roun' right in An' Polly's face

an' strut herse'f home,—an' her purty feath-'rs drap out all 'long de road. Dat night at de sociable, Lilly, she come wid John, an' I tell yer, man, she look purty, too, wid dem gran' flow'rs John fotch her. John he so proud he mos' bustin'. He take an' strut all roun' wid Lilly hangin' on his arm, an' all de fokes talkin' 'bout how fine dey looks. Bimeby, hyah come Tishy wid Jack Sparrer an—"

"Wasn't Jack Sparrow too little for Tishy Peafowel?" appealed Mary Van.

" 'Cose he wus, but yer see Tishy done loss her chusin', an' she got ter take whut she kin git.—Jack Sparrer doan wanter go wid her neeth'r, but yer see Tishy wus so fus' class dat Jack ax her, so he kin mix wid de hifalutin' fokes. Dem sparrers er sight, I tell yer," she mused.

"Go on, Mammy," Willis shook the book.

"Well, whin Lilly see Tishy look so pitiful long side er Jack Sparrer, she go right straight an' walk 'long side er her, 'caze ev'ybody laffin' at Tishy.

"Lilly ain' talk ter Tishy long, 'fo' she fine out Tishy want ter sing er chune. Lilly she go an' tell John:

" 'Yer mus' ax Tishy ter sing.'

"John say, 'I'm too bizzy ter fool wid Tishy.'

"Lilly coo sof' an' ax', 'Please, John.'

"John say, 'All right.'

"Oh, I tell yer, John sing ev'rybody's chune wid 'em. He so happy he can' keep his mouf shet. Jes' den he 'nounce dat Miss Tishy Peafowel gwine sing. Ev'rybody feel like shettin' der eyes whin dat straggly

fe'th'r Tishy walk up ter de pianny. She 'nounce, she do:

" 'I ain' sot er chune sense I got well, but ef youall's bleege ter hyah me, I'll do m' bes'.'

"Mussy gracious! de fokes hatt'r hole on ter der ye'rs,—"

"Why, Mammy?"

At that moment, the peafowl in Mary Van's yard uttered a piercing screech.

"Dat's de rees'n," she answered. "Peafowel's bin singin' jes' dat erway sense den. Whoopee, whin Tishy see fokes stoppin' up der ye'rs, she fling herse'f 'roun' an' grab John Mockin'bird by de arm an' walk clean out'n de meetin' house."

"Was her feath'rs dropping out, too?" reminded Mary Van.

"Dat dey wus, she scatter 'em ev'ywhar she

go. Whin she git John out in de dark, she flounce 'roun' an' say: 'You ain' sich er big sumbody, John Mockin'bird! Lilly Dove say she jes' 'spise you an' yo' ugly ole flow'rs —dat she wush ter de Lawd she had er nice gent'mun like Mist'r Jack Sparrer ter car'y her home ternight. She say she jes' plum sick er you.' John look at Tishy, tryin' ter make out whut she say, den he sorter puff out his chist an' strut back in de meetin'."

"Didn't he know Tishy was mean an bad?" asked Willis.

"How he gwine know, son? Tishy wus mouty fus' class 'fo' Big Eye come eroun'. Howsomev'r, whin him an' Tishy go back in de meetin' house, Tishy had done los' ev'y one er her purty feath'rs, an' she wusn't nuthin' but er ugly ole brown Peahen!— an' she bin ugly ev'r sense, 'caze she ain'

nuv'r got nuf purty on de inside, ter make no mo' purty on de outside ergin."

"Did Jack Sparrow take Lilly Dove home?" asked Mary Van.

"Yas, mam, 'caze John ax him ter, an' John ax Lilly ter give him dem flow'rs, too. Lilly dunno whut ter make whin she see John take an' th'ow 'em out'n de wind'r—she mos' die!"

"Did she cry, Mammy?" Mary Van asked sympathetically.

"She nuv'r cry den, but she sho' bus' her eyes op'n whin she git home by herse'f. Po' Lilly, she stay er prayin' an' er cryin' all night long." Phyllis's voice trembled in sympathy, and unconsciously the little girl and boy found themselves on either side of her, so close as to prevent the progress of quilt making. She laid the unfinished

square on the table, and placed an arm about each.

"Yas, chillun, Lilly fix her eyes on de Lawd. Dat's de diffunce b'twixt her an' Tishy—yer see, trubble make some fokes purtier on de inside 'n ev'r. Lilly dunno whut ail John, but she *do know* dat she holdin' on ter de Lawd."

"Tell God about Lilly quick, Mammy." Willis fidgeted.

"Ain' I done tole yer de Lawd doan need fokes ter hope Him?"

"But we don't want Lilly to cry any more," urged Mary Van.

"She washin' her eyes in cole water now, 'caze An' Polly knockin' at de do'. An' Polly see de cur'us doin's at de sociable las' night, an' she can' wait ter eat her brekfus' 'fo' she go up ter Lilly's house. Whin An'

Polly see po' Lilly's sweet lit'le face all swool up, de Lawd tu'n her h'art ter goodnes' an' she kiss Lilly an' say, 'I wants yer ter go out ter de Water Falls, an' hope er po' lit'le bird Doct'r Peck'rwood say some bad boy hit wid er rock.'

"Lilly she tie her bonnet on, an' fly out ter de Falls 'fo' yer knows hit. Den An' Polly she come on ter Tishy Peafowels an' ax Tishy, 'Whut in de name er de Lawd ail Lilly Dove an' John Mockin'bird?'

"Tish thow her head back an' laf one dese mean sorter lafs an' say: 'I done hit, I wus jes' ti'ed uv ev'ybody runnin' atter dat mealy mouf Lilly Dove, an' I jes' 'termine ter part her an' John—'caze John orter be my beau, ennyhow.'

"An' Polly mos' fall out'n de tree whin Tishy say dat. Yas, suh, she jes' fly up ter

John's quick es she kin. John, he walkin' up an' down wid his han's und'r his coat tails, mumblin' an' grumblin' ter hisse'f, an' hit wus right smart time 'fo' he see An' Polly settin' dar.

"An' Polly, she say: 'John Mockin'bird, Tishy Peafowel done tole me dat low down sto'y she tole you 'ginst Lilly Dove.'

"John, he look at An' Polly like he can't make out whut she say.

"An' Polly say, 'Hit's de trufe,—Tishy make up ev'r wurd she tell you, an' po' lit'le Lilly bin cryin' her eyes out all night.'

"John bus' out moanin', 'Whut mus' I do?'

"She tell 'im: 'Lilly out at de Water Falls now.'

"But John he feerd ter go whar Lilly at. So An' Polly, she fly wid him tell dey sights de Falls, den she lef' 'im. John, he fly er

lit'le, an' hop er lit'le tell he git clost nuf ter see Lilly wrop'n up de po' lit'le bird's leg, an' cooin' so sof' ter hit—den John, he fly on de tree, an' cry out er chune ter Lilly dat mos' broke her h'art,—he sing:

> "'I ain' good nuf fur Lilly Dove,
> But she de onlies' one I love.'

"Lilly she stoop low ov'r de lit'le bird so John can't see whar she cryin' at. An' John he fly down an' tell her he gwine jump in de Falls ef she 'fuse ter keep comp'ny wid him—but Lawd, whin he git clost ernuf ter see dem tears er Lilly's, he th'ows his arms 'roun' her an'—but you all chillun ain' got no biznes' knowin' no mo' en dat."

"Please, Mammy, tell us if John jumped in the falls," sympathetically begged Willis, eager to lose none of the details.

Phyllis chuckled, "No, my Lawd, dey got marr'ed instid, an' went ter housekeepin' in dat tall pine stump ov'r yond'r on Tinker Knob."

XIII

MISTER GRAB-ALL SPIDER

MISTER GRAB-ALL SPIDER

"What made that old hornet sting me for, Mammy Phyllis?" demanded Mary Van, regarding tearfully her little red swelling hand.

" 'Caze, honey," replied Phyllis, seating herself in a chair beside the hammock, "he thought you had done jine Cap'n Yall'r Jackit's army ter fight 'ginst him."

"What they going to fight about?" Willis began to fidget to see the fight.

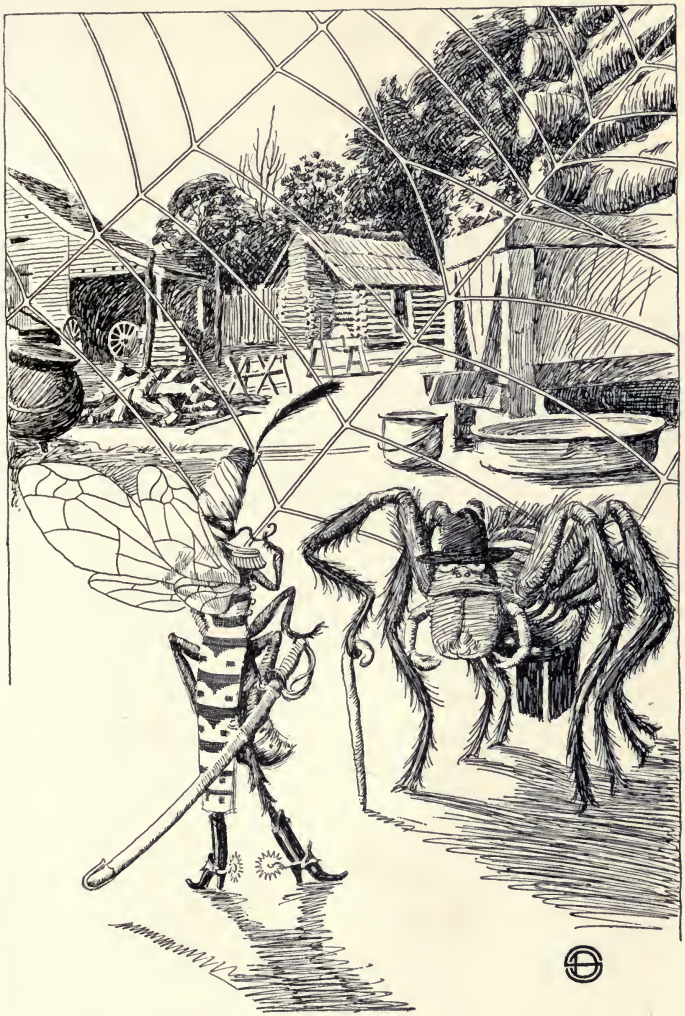
"Set still, boy, you'll th'ow dis gal clean out'n de hammock." She readjusted both of them, and resumed her seat. "Dey fightin' ov'r dat ole pan er dirty cid'r settin' out yond'r b'hime de ash-hopp'r. Yer

see Cap'n Yall'r Jackit an' Cap'n Hornit, bofe uv' em, jes' er gwine back'ards an' fur'-ards 'mongst de varmints, tryin' ter see which one kin git de mo'es fokes ter jine der side. Miss Queen Bee tell 'em, hit's de bizzy season in de honey biznes' an' she ain' got no time ter fool wid none uv 'em. Cap'n Yall'r Jackit sorter stop and study, he do, den he g'long down de big road tell he come up wid Mist'r Grab-All Spid'r. He pass howdy wid 'im, den he 'nounce:

" 'Mist'r Grab-All, 'cose you gwine jine de Yall'r Jackits' side, ain't yer?'

"Grab-All Spid'r sort'r op'n an' shet his claws an' th'ow his 'bark'r quid on de uth'r side his jaw an' 'spon':

" 'Nor, I'm jes' er plain ole biznes' man, —I ain' got no fightin' sense like dese rip snortin', hifalutin' solger boys. I'll jes'



"MIST'R GRAB-ALL, 'COSE YOU GWINE JINE DE YALL 'R JACKITS SIDE, AIN 'T YER?"

stan' off an' watch de battle, but,' sez he, 'I hopes you'll whup de fight, Cap'n Yall'r Jackit, 'pon de wurd uv er gent'mun I does, 'caze dat pan er cid'r's wuth er tussle, an' youse de man ter make hit.'

"Yall'r Jackit sorter swell hisse'f out er lit'le big'r, an' Mist'r Grab-All roll hisse'f up in er ball like he bin sleep er hundred ye'rs, an' ain' nuv'r heah tell uv er Yall'r Jackit in his life.

"Bimeby, hyah come Cap'n Hornit zoonin' down de big road. Old Grab-All Spid'r onrap hisse'f an' start ter stretchin' his legs out, an' chawin' on his 'bark'r quid ergin.

"Cap'n Hornit say, 'Name er de Lawd, Mist'r Grab-All, is you bin sleep th'u all dis fracus dat's 'bout ter bus' loose?'

"Grab-All spit his quid out, an' gap loud

er time er two, an' say, 'Whut you torkin' 'bout, Cap'n Hawnit?'

"Hawnit zoon erbout, an' holl'r, 'Wake up!' sez he, 'Wake up, I wants yer ter hope me wipe dem Yall'r Jackits off'n creation.'

"Grab-All set up an' take notice, like he gwine jine de hawnit's army dat minit, den he sorter crumble hisse'f down, an' low, 'Lawdy, Lawdy, ef I jes' wus er solger like you is, Cap'n Hawnit, I'd be de bigges' man in de woel.' Whut's de use er you axin' enybody ter hope you fight?—Why you kin whup out dem Yall'r Jackits 'fo' de time start ter commence!' Den he laf' an' slap hisse'f on de knee, an' say, 'I wush ter de Lawd I wus er fightin' man like you is, Cap'n!'

"Cap'n Hawnit swell his chist out tell he look like he gwine bus' dem solger butt'ns

off sho', an' Grab-All roll hisse'f up ergin like he done gone back ter sleep er nuth'r hund'rd ye'rs.

"Soon es Cap'n Hawnit g'long off, Grab-All onrap hisse'f ergin, an' swing er long on de lim' er de trees by his spid'r web."

"Mammy, why didn't he walk on the ground?"

" 'Caze, son, he nuv'r want ter make no tracks, so fokes kin fine out his biznes'. —Nor, suh, he swing hisse'f by dat spid'r web er his'n tell he come ter Mist'r Inch Wurm's house. Inch Wurm's old lady say, 'Yond'r come dat old Grab-All Spid'r, yer bett'r take keer how yer fools wid 'im.'

"Jes' den Grab-All th'ow his hat on de flo' an' bow low down ter Miss Inch Wurm an' sez he, 'I jes' come ter tell yo' ole man

whar dar's er sight er money waitin' fur somebody ter come 'long an' pick up.'

"Ole lady Inch Wurm sort'r take notice, she do, an' ax 'im ter pass de news erlong. Grab-All say: 'Nor, you jes' set right still tell me an' yo' ole man come back an' fetch yer er hat full er money.'

"Old lady Inch Wurm git up an' g'long down town, an' start ter spindin' dat money right den. Soon es she done out'n de way, Grab-All tell Inch Wurm 'bout de cid'r in de pan b'hime de ash-hopp'r; an', sez he, 'we'll make de Hawnits an' Yall'r Jackits fight derse'fs ter death, den me an' you'll 'vide de cid'r, dat is ef you kin mea'jer off how much dey is in de pan 'thout lettin' fokes know whut you doin'.'

"Yer see Grab-All sich er big biznes' man dat he bleege ter know how big de pan is,

an' how much's in dar, down ter de ve'y drap. So Inch Wurm he put on his ole close an' went er crawlin' off ter mea'jer de cid'r, an' 'tain' long 'fo' hyah he come back ergin wid de news fur Grab-All. Grab-All tell 'im: 'You done wurk fine, an' you done wurk quick,—in fack,' sez he, 'you done yo' wurk s' good I gwine fix yer, so you doan hatt'r do no mo' wurk long es you live.' Den he laf in his sleeve.

"Mammy, don't let Grab-All hurt Inch Wurm," begged Mary Van.

"Dat can't be hop'd, honey, Inch Wurm know too much 'bout Grab-All's biznes', an' Grab-All got ter shet his mouf some way, —He take an' spin er teenchy-weenchy lit'le web, right whar Inch Wurm got ter git out at. Inch Wurm, he start off, feelin' pow'ful fine he do, an' 'fo' yer knows hit,

dar he wus all tangle up in Grab-All's web. Grab-All, he run 'roun' like he tryin' ter hope 'im out, but he jes' spinnin' de web tight'r so Inch Wurm nuv'r is ter git out no mo'.—He got ter starve ter death, 'caze he's in Grab-All's way, an' Grab-All gwine see nobody doan come 'roun' dar ter hope 'im neeth'r. 'Cose he doan mine Miss Lightnin' Bug passin' de time er night wid him, 'caze she can' do nuthin' mo'en ter bright'n 'im up er lit'le,—but he keep his eye on her, too.

"Nex' day, de fight commence! Suh, I tell yer hit wus de pepperes' fight yer ev'r seed. Dem Hawnits fly inter dem Yall'r Jackits, tell yer can't see de groun' fur de dead Jackits; but hyah come de Jackits back at de Hawnits! Lawdee! dey come wid der foots, an' der han's, an' der haids all ter-

geth'r.—Yas, suh, dey come er buttin' an' er bitin' an' er stingin' mouty nigh at de same time! Yas, my Lawd, de dead Jackits wus kiv'r'd up wid de dead Hawnits! Oh! I tell yer dem varmints fit like sho' nuf war times!

"Whin bofe sides 'ud stop ter sorter blow er lit'le, an' think mebbe dey kin confab de res' er de fight out,—ole Grab-All'd come fus' ter de Hawnits, an' den ter de Jackits, an' tell 'em dey boun' ter whup out de nex' jump. Whin he see de Hawnits gittin' de wus er de charge, he run tell 'em wharbouts ter hit de Jackits. Whin he see too minny er de Jackits gittin' kilt, he run tell dem wharbouts ter cripple de Hawnits. He keep on gwine fus' ter one, den ter de uth'r twell dey wusn't er han' full lef' on bofe sides."

"Why didn't they turn in and beat old Mister Grab-All?" Willis bristled.

" 'Caze bofe uv 'em think Grab-All wus on der side. Grab-All ain' lef' no tracks ter pint out whar he bin—nor, suh, he so full er dat spid'r web biznes' er his'n dat he kin swing hisse'f fum ennywhar,—an' fo' yer kin kitch 'im, he done swing 'roun' in er-nuth'r place onti'ly."

"Captain Yellow Jacket's side beat the fight, didn't they, Mammy?" Mary Van desired the hornets vanquished.

"No, they didn't," contradicted Willis, "a hornet can beat a Yellow Jacket every time!"

"Jes' hole on dar!" Phyllis steadied the hammock. "I'm de onlies' one dat seen who 'twas whup'd."

"I want Captain Yellow Jacket's side to

kill all of the hornets," whimpered Mary Van.

"But they can't," persisted Willis vehemently.

Once more Phyllis held the hammock. "You dunno nuthin' tall erbout hit, suh," as she saw the little girl about to cry, "Hawnits is got mo' pow'r en Jackits is got, but er Jackit is mo' smart'r en er Hawnit. I 'speck ef Grab-All had er helt his mouf out'n de fracus, de Jackits wud er outfit de Hawnits, but es hit wus, Grab-All keep 'em fightin' tell dem whut wusn't kilt wus hit so hard dat hit 'twan' long 'fo' de ve'y las' one uv 'em died. Atter dat hap'n Grab-All, he got de cid'r!

"He spin erlong b'ildin' on some houses he fixin' ter rent tell bimeby Mist'r Blue Bot'le Fly an' his fambly come erlong.

Mist'r Blue Bot'le whisper ter his chillun ter give Grab-All plenty er road. I tell yer Grab-All swing hisse'f down, he do, an' ax Mist'r Blue Bot'le whut ail his fambly dat dey look so po'ly.

"Blue Bot'le say: 'I ain' nuv'r see sich er time in m' life! De rich fokes done stretch wire ov'r de vit'als s'tight dat dey ain' nuthin' fur de po' flies ter do 'cep'n ter starve.'

"Grab-All say, 'Dat's de trufe, Brer Blue Bot'le, an' I feels s' sorry fur yer dat I'm gwine give you an' yo' fambly all de vit'als yer kin eat.'

"Bot'le Fly so glad he gwine git sumthin' fur nuthin', dat he fergit ter 'member how raskilly Grab-All wus, an' whin he do 'member 'bout hit, he think he gwine keep his eye op'n an' git de fus' lick. He jes' nachelly

can't let dat free vit'als git way fum 'im, doan keer how low down Grab-All wus. So him an' his fambly foll'r Grab-All ter de pan er cider, an' dey so hongry, dey fergits 'bout ev'ythin' 'cep'n eatin'. Grab-All set up on de ash-hopp'r an' mos' kill hisse'f laffin'."

"Why, Mammy?"

" 'Caze, son, he jes' fatnin' dem flies ter kill 'em off like yo' ma do chickins. Whin de flies 'gun ter git fat, he spin er teenchy, lit'le web, an' whin dey git kotch'd, he run an' make like he tryin' ter onhitch 'em, but he tie 'em up wusser, an' sting 'em tell dey dies. Den he take 'em ter one dem houses an' sto' 'em erway."

"Did he kill all of Mister Blue Bottle's family?" asked Mary Van.

"Dey wusn't er one uv 'em lef', honey, not eb'n Miss Blue Bot'le's baby gal, an'

nobody dunno de money Grab-All make on de fly trade dat winter nuth'r."

"Mammy Phyllis, are all spiders kin to Grab-All?"

"Dey's all kin, but dey ain't all got de same name, 'caze yer see all uv 'em ain't got de same slicknes' ter git way wid fokes like Grab-All do," she explained.

"Did Mister Grab-All give the other spiders some of Mister Blue Bottle's children to eat?" asked Mary Van, by way of suggestive generosity.

"Nor, suh, Grab-All say he ain' got no pockit book kin—he say he need all he got, an' mo' b'sides." Then she added: "But dey doan need Grab-All ter give 'em nuthin' 'caze none uv 'em wus po'—all uv 'em got nuf spid'r web in 'em ter swing erlong 'dout trackin' up der biznes'."

She reached out to steady the hammock as Willis scrambled out.

"Mammy," he exclaimed, "Captain Yellow Jacket and Captain Hornet didn't get a thing."

"Nor, suh," said Phyllis, lifting Mary Van to the ground, "an' nobody nev'r do git nuthin' dat keeps der senses in der fistes 'stid er der haids—Ketch Ma'y Van by de uth'r han' an' come on."

XIV

MISTER RATTLESNAKE

"Whut yer givin' dat boy, Zeek?—I boun' hit 'tain' nuthin' fur no good."

Phyllis started for the garden gate, where a suspicious conference was going on between Willis and the gardener. "Howcum yer can't op'n yer haid whin fokes speaks ter yer?" Seeing his unwillingness to reply, she threw her apron partly over her head and quickened her pace.

"Me an' de lit'le man wus jes' fixin' ter make yer 'quainted wid er present I fotch him fum ov'r t'oth'r side de creek," explained Zeek.

"Whar de present?" she interrupted with

annoyance, as she perceived he was trying to tease her.

She took the little boy by the hand and started for the house.

"Wait, Mammy," he begged, pulling back; "Unk Zeek, please gimme the snakes."

"Give you whut, in de name er de Lawd!" exclaimed Phyllis.

"Jes' two lit'le gyarters I kotch an' put in er bottle fur de chile," Zeek explained again.

"Yas," returned Phyllis angrily, "you kotch dem snakes fur nuthin' but ter tu'n 'em loose 'bout my foots, soon es you gits me in er tight place—I knows yer. Yer orter be 'shame er yo'se'f,—an' callin' yo'se'f er deac'n, too!"

Zeek threw his head back and gave a roaring laugh. "Whew!" he finished, "Sis'

Phyllis, you is de slickes' 'ooman I ev'r seed. How yer know I gwine tu'n dem gyrters loose on yer?" and Zeek laughed again until he held to the gate for support.

Phyllis turned without deigning a reply.

"Hole on, Sis' Phyllis," Zeek ran and caught her by the arm, "hole on, Sist'r,—you ain' mad sho' nuf, is yer?"

"Tu'n me loose, Zeekiel," she demanded furiously.

Instead, he caught the other arm also. "I ain' gwine let yer go mad like yer is," then consiliatingly, "yer knows dem gyart'rs snakes can't bite nobody—I jes' wanter see yer dance er lit'le," and again he laughed, as the picture presented itself.

"I gwine call Miss Lucy, ef yer doan take yer han's off'n me," stolidly demanded Phyllis.

"All right," he said holding on as tightly as ever, "I jes' want yer ter wait hyah tell I goes down ter de orchard an' gets yer er hat full er dem big peaches." This argument lessened the rigidity of her face. "Dey's de fines' thing ter swage mis'ry er de speeret yer ev'r seed." She allowed him to shove her gently to the ground under the lilac bushes. "Hyah, set right hyah tell I comes back." Seeing the old woman partly restored to good humor, he slammed the garden gate behind him and went down the path, singing.

"Come on, Mammy, less us get my lit'le green snakes Unk Zeek brought me," Willis started back to the garden.

"Come back hyah, boy," as she caught him by the skirt of his blouse, "dem snakes wusn't brung hyah fur you, Zeek jes' makin'

er 'cat's paw' er you. He 'ceivin' you jes' like Mist'r Rattlesnake done Miss Eve."

"No, he ain't, Unk Zeek loves me," defended the boy.

"Dat's jes' whut Miss Eve think whin de sarpint temp' her."

"What's er sarpint?" He still pulled against her.

"Er sarpint is er snake, honey—dat's jes' his scriptur' name—come on an' set in Mammy's lap an' she'll tell yer 'bout how ole Mist'r Rattlesnake fix hisse'f up so fine, way back yonder time, an' come struttin' roun' Miss Eve. He nuv'r come crawlin' like snakes does dese days neeth'r, nor, suh, he come walkin' plum on de een' er his tail; an' he look s' fine an' starchy dat—"

"Didn't he have to hop?" Willis scrambled into her lap.

"Nor, de Lawd fix hit so he doan hatt'r hop. I'm tellin' 'zackly de trufe,—he come walkin' on de een' er his tail," she insisted, "an he look s' fine an' gran', like some er de fine men folks, dat Miss Eve cudn't see how black wid sin he wus."

"You are not black with sin," and he pulled the wrinkled face to him and kissed it.

"Bless my baby," looking into his face as she hugged him, "dis hyah black on Mammy's face is nig'r black," she squeezed him again, "but sin black, like Mr. Rattlesnake got, stays in fokeses hearts whar hits hard ter see, whin hit's kiv'r'd up wid fine man'rs an' er slick tongue.

"So whin Mist'r Rattlesnake come bowin' an scrapin' ter Miss Eve wid dat beav'r hat on, an' dat walkin' stick whirlin' roun' in his

han', she git so airish tryin' ter th'ow off man'rs like his'n, dat whin he tell her ter eat dat pis'n apple, she et hit 'dout knowin' whut she doin'. Howsumev'r, whin Mist'r Rattlesnake but'n up his long tail coat sort'r keerles' like, an' strut hisse'f off, Miss Eve, she 'gun ter feel de mis'ry er dat pis'n apple."

"Did her mama give her some castor oil?" Willis sympathized with Miss Eve.

"No, my Lawd, she sot dar an' holl'r tell Adam come an' ax her whut ail 'er. She start ter laffin' she did, an' say: 'I jes' callin' you ter eat one dem fine meller apples Mist'r Rattlesnake fotch' me!' "

"Did Mist'r Adam eat it?" asked Willis with much concern.

"Who gwine hind'r him fum eatin' hit? An' de Eveses is bin pis'nin' de Adamses ev'r

sense—you 'memb'r whut Mammy tell yer, an' look out fur 'em."

"Why didn't Mist'r Adam kill Mist'r Rattlesnake?" he resented.

" 'Caze his own sin done make him er coward, dat's de trufe!—Whin er man do mean an' low life tricks hisse'f, he ain' got de face ter stan' up an' whup nobody fur doin' de same thing; but Adam didn't hatt'r whup de Sarpint 'caze de Lawd knock 'im flat 'pon de groun' an' tromp on 'im, an' tell 'im he got ter crawl de res' er his life, ter keep up wid his low down ways."

Mary Van's voice sounded from the gate, "I can't open it."

Willis sprang to her assistance, but Phyllis caught him: "Will yer run right straight back, ef Mammy let yer onfas'n de gate?"

The promise was given, and in a moment

Willis returned with: "Mammy, less show Mary Van m' two lit'le green snakes." He was off in a second, but Phyllis again detained him.

"Nummine 'bout dem gyrt'r snakes,—I ain' got start'd ter tellin' 'bout Mist'r Rattlesnake yit. Come on hyah Ma'y Van, an' set down on de grass, an' Mammy gwine spread out her ap'on fur you ter set on, 'caze she hatt'r hole dis wiggly boy in her lap."

"I want to see Willis's snakes," demurred the little girl.

Phyllis looked thoughtfully a moment, then throwing her hands up suddenly, "I wond'r is enybody got de news 'bout Mist'r Rattlesnake's toofake? You ain' heah nuthin' is yer, Ma'y Van?"

Mary Van shook her head in the negative.

"Who you shakin' dat haid at, gal?"

"No, ma'm," quickly corrected the child.

"De las' time de snake doct'r come by hyah, he wus huntin' fur some yerbs ter put in Mist'r Rattlesnake's toof," continued the old woman in an interested tone. "Miss Eve, she tell de doct'r ter g'long an' git de same kind er yerbs he give fur rattlesnake bite, dat Mist'r Rattlesnake jes' got mad an' bite his own se'f, an' dat whut ail his toof."

"Who made him mad?" Mary Van knelt on the edge of the apron.

"De Lawd make him mad whin He tell him he can't git no mo' free vit'als out'n Eden. De Lawd say, 'Nor, suh, yer got ter wurk, an' sweat, an' crawl fur vit'als de res' er yo' life—an' you an' Miss Eve gwine fight one nuth'r tell one er yer gits kilt."

"When are they going to fight?" asked Willis eagerly.

"Dey fit dat ve'y day; an' whin hit git too hot fur Miss Eve, she take an' jump on top er ole man Elerphant's back 'fo' Mist'r Rattlesnake cud git her. He try ter crope up ole man Elerphant's legs, but Elerphant keep his foots wurkin' s' much, an' his snout flyin' roun' s' tur'bul, dat Mist'r Rattlesnake hatt'r keep out'n de way. Miss Eve she set up an' laf' at him, an' dat make Mist'r Rattlesnake so mad, he rip an' tar', an' fome at de mouf, an' mos' turn hisse'f wrong side out'ards tryin' ter hop up an' bite Miss Eve. Miss Eve she th'ow herse'f eroun' laffin' an' say: 'Ynan, ynan,' at 'im, tell Mist'r Rattlesnake git so mad he jes' up, an' bite his own se'f."

"Did it kill him?" Mary Van crawled further on the apron and sat beside the little boy.

"Hit wud er kilt him ef he hadn't er run'd an' got dem rattlesnake yerbs mouty quick,—an' dat's howcum Miss Eveses' chilluns know how ter kyore rattlesnake bite."

"How, Mammy?" demanded Willis.

"'Caze Miss Eve watch de yerbs Mist'r Rattlesnake eat ter swage his pis'n, den she tell her chilluns ter eat de same kine ef he ev'r bite dem." [1]

"Did Mist'r Rattlesnake bite Miss Eve's children?" asked Willis.

[1] The old Cherokee Indian cure for rattlesnake poison is "Robin Plantain, Sweet Fern, Pine Snake root, Salve Weed, Devil's Shoe String, Wild Rosemary, and Red Joint." It was said that by infuriating the reptile until a wound was self-inflicted and then observing his selection of herbs as a remedy, the Indians found the antidote for rattlesnake bite. Reptiles that were bitten and kept in confinement died, while those allowed freedom to select and bite the herbs, recovered.

"He bite 'em ev'y time he git er chanct."

"But it don't kill them, because they know how to get cured, don't they, Mammy Phyllis?" Mary Van disliked tragedy.

"Miss Eve's Injun chillun kyores derse'f, but de res' er de fambly dies."

"No, Mist'r Rattlesnake shan't bite Miss Eve's children," said Mary Van, shaking her curls.

"You late in de day gittin' in yo' sayso, 'caze Mist'r Rattlesnake bite you ef you fools wid 'im; he ain' nuv'r git in er good hum'r wid nobody sense de Lawd make him wurk fur his livin'. He bin crawlin' crookid, an' doin' fokes crookid ev'r sense."

"How does he work?" Willis pulled her face to him.

"He wurk makin' uth'r fokes do his wurk fur 'im, dat's how he wurk. His ole 'ooman

an' de chillun keep de sto', an' Unk Toad Frog try ter wurk de farm fur 'im, but Mist'r Rattlesnake done eat up so miny er de Toad Frog fambly dat Unk Toad ain' got nuf han's lef' ter make er crap. He tell Mist'r Rattlesnake ef he doan git sumbody ter hope him, he ain' gwine have no corn, so Mist'r Rattlesnake take out down de big road huntin' fur farm han's, he do. He come ter er passel er Hop'r Grasses settin' down on de side de road doin' nuthin', an' he tell 'em ef dey come an' hope him raise er crap er corn, he'll give 'em ha'f de crap. Well, suh, dem Hop'r Grasses plow an' hoe, an' weed, an' pick bugs off an'—"

"Mammy, don't call them 'hopper grasses,' Mary Van says you must say 'Grass-hoppers.' "

"In de name er de Lawd, whut do Ma'y Van know 'bout varmints an' beastes?"

"My papa says you must call them Grasshoppers," protested Mary Van.

"I doan speck Mist'r Hop'r Grass menshun ter yo' pa dat Hop'r wus jes' er nickname, did he?"

The little girl was obliged to acknowledge that no such communication had taken place.

"Den he ain' got no 'pin'ons ter scat'r on de subjec'—Hop'r Grass say he wush ter de Lawd fokes'd stop nam'n' him hine part b'fo', ennyhow. He say he plum ti'ed white fokes med'lin' in his 'far's—"

"Mammy, go on about Mister Rattlesnake," Willis began to fidget.

"Set still den, lemme see whar 'bouts I wus at—"

"The Hopper Grasses were working in the field," Mary Van prompted.

"Dat's de trufe, dat's jes' whar dem po' things wus at. Lawdee, how dem varmints jes' nachelly wurk derse'fs mouty nigh ter death. Bimeby, de corn 'gun ter tos'l an' git ripe, an' Mist'r Rattlesnake see de harves' ain' fur off, an' he know he bleeg'd ter 'vide dat corn wid dem Hop'r Grasses. He lay out on de creek bank an' study how he gwine ter cheat 'em. One day de Hop'r Grasses wus er settin' down in de shade er de corn jes' waitin' fur Mist'r Rattlesnake ter give de wurd ter go ter cuttin', whin Mist'r Rattlesnake crope up ter de back er de fiel' an' clim' on top er de fence an' give er crack er his tail so loud dat de po' Hop'r Grasses scat'r all ov'r de country ev'y which er way. Dey wus so skeer'd, hit take

'em er long time fo' dey darsen't ter come back ter see whut 'twus skeer'd 'em. By dat time, Mist'r Rattlesnake had done trench hisse'f on dis side de law. Yas, suh, he tak'n his seat 'pon top er dat gate, an' 'fuse ter let er one on 'em come in de fiel'. He tell 'em dey done flew'd off an' lef' him 'fo' harves' time, an' dee done broke der corn-track, an' no law ain' gwine hole him ter his'n, an' dey mout jes' es well ter g'long off an' git ernuth'r job."

"Didn't the Hopper Grasses fight him?" Willis' fists closed at the thought.

"Fight? Whut chanct wud dey had 'ginst dat low down Rattlesnake?" lifting Mary Van from her apron and trying to pull herself up by the bushes. "Dey done whut ev'ybody does dat runs up 'ginst snake law —dey got swindl'd."

"What's snake law?" he tried to assist her.

"Snake law is sin law, doan you nuv'r fergit dat," she smoothed her apron out, and adjusted the little boy's blouse, "an' whin you gits ter be er big man like yo' pa, jes' recoleck whut yo' Mammy tole yer, dat law whut ain't right right, is snake law, an' dem whut foll'rs 'long b'hime hit has got ter go in er crook'd track. 'Memb'r dat long es you live, Mammy's man."

Willis again begged to show Mary Van the green snakes, when Phyllis exclaimed, "Sakes er live, look at de peaches dat nigg'r Zeek is got."

XV

MISS QUEEN BEE

MISS QUEEN BEE

'Keep way fum dem bee hives, yer hyah?" admonished Phyllis from her old rocking chair under the cherry tree, where she alternately dozed and kept watch on the children playing around her in the yard.

"Mammy, the bees are all crawling out of the hive," exclaimed Willis.

"Lawdy mussy, dem bees fixin' ter swarm!" then raising her voice, "Zeek'l,—ah Zeek!—come quick, yer bees fixin' ter swarm!"

Zeek came running up through the garden, with a tin pan and stick in hand calling, "Which way'd dey go?"

But the bees answered the question them-

selves, for at that moment they started in the direction of the garden. Zeek began to beat furiously upon the tin pan, while the children screamed in excitement as they beheld the bees hover a moment above Zeek's head, then descend one and all upon his hat. Many straggling ones crawled about his face, one in its distraction landed upon his eyelid, closing the eye.

Zeek walked steadily without batting the open eye, until he reached an empty gum. There with the assistance of Phyllis, he carefully relieved his head of its dangerous burden.

"Whew!" he exclaimed, wiping the perspiration from his head, "dat's de outbangin'es' hivin' I ev'r done in all m' life, an' dat hive in dat ole gum ain't wurth er cent," he ended reflectively.

"Howcum yer sayso?"

"Lawd, Phyllis," he replied pushing his hat on the back of his head and folding his arms across his chest, "you'se he'rd er menny time dat

> " 'De bees dat swarms in May,
> Is wurth er load er hay,
> De bees dat swarms in June
> Is wurth er silv'r spoon;
> Dem dat swarms in July
> Ain't wurth er house fly.'

An' dem bees er swarmin' hyah in Argus' ain' wurth nuthin' but ter show you whut er bee-hiv'r I is."

"Hit show pertic'ler you ain' nuthin' ter make honey out'n," Phyllis laughed.

"I ain' notice none uv 'em smackin' der mouf' ov'r you yerse'f, Sis' Phyllis," he retorted grinning.

"Bees don't eat people, Uncle Zeek," Mary Van endeavored to explain, "they just sting them like hornets do."

"Does dey, honey? Well, I boun' none uv 'em ain' gwine wase er sting on dat ole black bag er salt ov'r yond'r," pointing at Phyllis.

"My Mammy's not any old black salt either!" And Willis squeezed her around the neck.

"She's er ole black nigg'r, dat's whut she is," teased Zeek.

"She's not black!—and she's not a nigger either!" and he began to kiss her face.

"Name er de Lawd, ef she ain't er nigg'r, an' she ain' black, whut is she?" Zeek thoroughly enjoyed the little boy's very evident discomfort.

"She's my Mammy,—and she's purty like

my mama." Willis was dangerously near tears, as he left Phyllis's lap and made for Zeek. "I'll hit you if you call my mammy a nigger."

Mary Van had thrown an iron toy at him, whereupon Phyllis interfered.

"G'long an' 'ten' ter yer biznes', Zeek,—I'm gwine call Miss Lucy ef you starts dese chillun ter cryin'.—Chillun, youall bring yer lit'le cheers yond'r an' set hyah in front uv Mammy, an' she'll tell yer 'bout Miss Queen Bee an' her fambly."

"Mammy, what made Miss Queen Bee move out from her house just now?" Willis interposed.

" 'Caze she wanter git erway f'um An' Polly Parrit—she say she ti'ed An' Polly pokin' her nose in her biznes'."

"Papa says she has to move 'cause her

children take up all the room." Willis gave this information with an air of knowing more on the subject.

"Dar now, yer hyah de preach'r, doan yer?" chuckling and looking with pride upon him.

"I speck you done outgrow'd dat confab Miss Queen Bee speak wid me too, ain't yer?"

Willis did not entirely gather her meaning, but he replied:

"My papa says they won't sting you if you don't bother 'em."

"Aha, yo' pa tole de trufe—'cep'n sometimes. Bees is cur'us creeturs, I tell yer dey is. Dey ain' nuthin' but er passel er fokes wid wings on 'em. Ole Miss Queen Bee settin' up dar, make 'em walk er chalk line, she do. She de law—she sho' is. Ef she

say fight,—dey fights. Ef she say, ax der pard'n,—dey axes hit. But,—" and she hesitated, rubbing her arm, "dey is sometimes whin bees gits jes' like crazy fokes an' loses all der senses."

"That's when they swarm, ain't it, Mammy?" suggested Willis authoritatively.

" 'Tain't no sich er thing,—You done give out all de knowin' you know'd 'bout bees. Set still an' lis'n ter sumbody else," reverting to her subject. "Dis time I'm talkin' 'bout wus whin triberlashun 'pon triberlashun hap'n ter Miss Queen's fokes.

"One day Miss Queen Bee's chillun was gittin' honey out'n de clov'r wid Miss Black Bee's chilluns. De Bizzy Bees notice Miss Black Bee's fokes doan seem ter be totin' much honey back and furrards, but dey ain' got no time ter confab, so dey doan say

nuthin'. Bimeby, Miss Queen Bee see one de Black Bee fokes come in wid her chillun, an' she notice he ain' brung no honey in wid him, but she do notice dat he tak'n considerbul out wid 'im."

"Mammy, my papa says they ain't any little bees that don't work except the drones," corrected the little boy.

"Lemme tell yer sump'in, yo' pa know mo' 'bout pol'tics dan he do 'bout bees. 'Caze I knows whin bees starts ter stealin', dey's de bigges' rogues in de woel. An' dese black bees whut I'm talkin' 'bout, wus scan'lus steal'rs, too. Bimeby, hyah come sum mo', an' mo', tell Miss Queen holl'r out fur her fightin' squad! Dem Bizzy Bee boys swarms quick whin dey heahs de war holl'r, an' 'tain' long 'fo' de Bizzy Bees an' de Black Bees wus er buzzin' an' er clippin'

at one nuth'r's wings, tell de wings wus fallin', 'round thick es gnats. I tell yer Miss Queen Bee's chillun had er mouty hard fight ter keep der honey, but bimeby dey run all de Black Bees off 'cep'n dem whut dey kilt."

"The Black Bees didn't hurt any of Miss Queen's children, did they?" asked Mary Van.

" 'Cose some uv 'em got hurt'd, an' some uv 'em wint so far es ter git kilt, but—"

"Wasn't Miss Queen mighty sorry for 'em?" sympathized the little girl.

"She ain' know nuthin' 'bout hit, 'caze Miss Queen Bee's chillun dat gits sick er hurted doan nuv'r come home. Nor, suh, dey g'long off an' die by derse'f."

"I don't want 'em to go off. I want all of them to sleep with their mama till they

get well;" Mary Van nudged the old woman's knee, "make 'em go and tell their mama wherebouts they hurt."

"No, mam, Miss Queen say she ain' got no time ter nuss nobody, 'caze Mist'r Rattlesnake crawlin' 'roun' her gum right now, an' she gittin' pow'ful nervious. She know Mist'r Rattlesnake know how rich wid honey she is, an' Rattlesnake know her boys comes home wid der pockits full ev'y trip. Ole Grab-All Spider know hit, too, an' he crope up on de uth'r side er de gum ter ketch de Bee boys whin dey lights. Whin Miss Queen see Mist'r Rattlesnake an' ole Grab-All Spider settin' 'long side er her do', she sen' Buzzy Drone Bee ter tell de fightin' squad ter git reddy ter fight ergin whin dey heahs de war holl'r."

"Why didn't she ask Mister Man to help

her?" Willis stood up and leaned against her knee.

"Miss Queen ain' gwine ax nobody ter hope her do nuthin'. She fixin' ter have er set'lement herse'f, but jes' es she fixin' ter git reddy, Mist'r Rattlesnake an' ole Grab-All Spider start ter gobblin' de Bee boys es dey lights."

"Please, Mammy, make 'em stop!" Mary Van was up tugging at Phyllis' shoulder. "Quick, Mammy, before they eat any more!"

"Lawd, chillun, Miss Queen so mis'erbul 'bout dem chillun, she plum crazy by now —she tell her chillun ter light out fum dar an' sting ev'y thing dey kin git on, an' dey dọes hit, too, fer de Bizzy Bees allus tends to dey biznes'."

"They stung old Grab-All and old Rattle-

snake first, didn't they?" Willis was half in her lap.

"No, suh, whin Grab-All an' Rattlesnake seen de blood in Miss Queen's eye, dey lit out fum dar, an' de Bizzy Bees come down on Jack Donkey. Jack he had jump de fence an' come up in de upper lot ter git er lit'le watermillon rine he seen by de back porch, an' I tell yer he kick out consid'rble whin dem bees drap derse'fs on him. He tak'n out fur de stable ter git Brer Dur'am Cow ter rake de bees off'n him,—ev'y one Brer Dur'am rake, light on his own se'f an' 'tain' long 'fo' him an' Jack takes out fur Mist'r Man's, an' ax him fur de Lawd's sake ter cl'ar 'em uv de bees. Mist'r Man's old lady, an' de lit'le boy come out ter see whut ail de beastes, an' I tell yer de bees start dem ter holl'rin' an' dancin',—An' Polly Parrit,

she come out ter git de news, an' I tell yer de ole lady git in de hottes' part er de fracus, too."

"Did they sting Mister Man's little boy much?" Mary Van pushed Willis, who was dancing all around Phyllis, out of her way. "Sit down, Willis."

"Lawdee," continued Phyllis, gently forcing the little boy into his chair again, "doan yer heah dat boy squallin' right now? Dem bare legs er his'n right full er bees. Mist'r Man, he run an' start ter smokin' de bees, fas' es he kin, an' bimeby, atter er long time, de Bee boys goes back ter dey ma."

"Mammy, you tell Miss Queen Bee to tell John Mocking Bird to eat old Grab-All up," pleaded Mary Van, putting her arms around Phyllis's neck.

"Ain' I done tole yer Miss Queen ain'

gwine ax nobody fur nuthin', an' she ain' gwine give nobody nuthin' neether? She tell her chillun ter scuf'le hard an' make er heap er honey, an' den hit doan make no diffunce whut happ'n. One day, one er her boys come out uv er flow'r so full er honey dat he come *blump* on de groun'. Ev'y time he try ter fly, hyah he come back *blump* on de groun' ergin. Nancy Hummin' Bird tell him ter git up on her back an' she'd give 'im er lif'. He crawl on Nancy's back an' she tuk 'im home. Whin Miss Queen seed him, she ax 'im how he got dar wid sich er load er honey. He tell his ma Nancy fotch 'im. Hoopee! she buzz on him I tell yer. Yas, suh! She say: 'Yer go straight es you kin an' pay fur dat ride.' "

"Did he pay five cents money, Mammy?" Willis rocked over backwards but was up

before Phyllis could rise. "It didn't hurt. Did she give him five cents, Mammy?"

"Nor, he give Miss Nancy some honey, whut she love good es de bees does, but Nancy got nuf mann'rs ter tell him she doan charge 'im, but Bizzy pay her enyhow, 'caze his ma done tole 'im dey ain' keerin' ter make no 'quaintance wid nobody 'cep'n wid flow'rs. Miss Queen say: 'Hit's all right ter mix up wid de flow'rs, 'caze dat's biznes', but de res' er de woel kin g'long whar dey's er mine ter.' Miss Queen totin' her haid pow'ful high dese days, 'caze dat gum's full er honey an' she ain' owin' nobody er cent. She say she ain' got no use fur nuthin' 'cepin' biznes'. Dey g'long ter bed mouty biggity, an' feelin' pow'ful rich, but 'long in de night er bad old man come an' take'n ev'r speck er honey in de

gum. Miss Queen think she done dremp er nightmar', but whin she git up in de mawnin' sho' nuf dey ain' got er Lawd's bite er brekfus'. Miss Queen, she say: 'G'long in de fiel', chillun, an' git us some brekfus'. 'Tain' gwine be long 'fo' we'll git rich ergin.'

"But Jack Frost meet 'em at de do', an' say, 'I'll bite de fus' man dat sticks his nose out.'

"Miss Queen say, 'Lawdy, Lawdy, whut we gwine do? De idee er rich fokes like we all wus, settin' hyah waitin' fur po' fokes ter hope us.'

"Jack Frost say, 'You done slip up right dar, Sis' Queen Bee, de Lawd ain' nuv'r make nobody so big dey kin git 'long by derse'f, an' ef you had er drapt er lit'le er dat honey 'long side de road whilst yer wus er makin' so much uv hit, you'd er had some uv

hit layin' 'round whar Mist'r Bad Man cudn't er foun' hit.' "

"Make old Mister Bad Man give 'em back some honey," Willis insisted.

"Mister Bad Man done sole dat honey an' got hisse'f er pa'r er shoes ter keep Jack Fros' fum bitin' his foots."

Both children were clamoring for the rescue of the bees.

"Nor, suh, dey done live by derse'fs whilst dey wus rich, an' now mis'ry done ketch up wid 'em, dey got ter perish in de same way."

"Boo hoo, boo hoo," wailed both, "I don't want Miss Bizzy Bee's children to perish."

"Hush cryin'."

But they continued in genuine sympathy.

"Y'uall cryin' so hard, yer can't see Mist'r Good Man comin' wid his han's right full er bee vit'als. But dat ain' gwine be

no less'n ter dem bees. Dey gwine do de same thing dis time nex' ye'r, 'caze dey's dem kine er fokes."

XVI

MISTER TALL PINE'S CHRISTMAS TREE

MISTER TALL PINE'S CHRISTMAS TREE

"Mammy, I wanter telephone Santy Claus," fretted Willis, seeking excuse to leave the nursery.

"Nor, he done gone erway fum home ter hunt up whar de good chilluns stays at," as she moved about putting the room to rights; "you an' Ma'y Van fix dat lit'le Chrismus tree ov'r yond'r fur Ma'y Van's dolls, an' you be ole man Sandy."

"I got ter telephone Santy Claus about little Leonora—he don't know she's come," insisted Willis.

"I dunno whut's de rees'n—he brung her

hisse'f dis mawnin'," still moving briskly about.

"I got to telephone Santy what to bring her," he persisted.

"Dat baby ain' got her eyes op'n yit."

"Yes, she has, Mammy," and Mary Van crossed the room and looked into Phyllis's face, "they're big brown ones, 'caus I went over to Uncle Hugh's house and looked at 'em good m'self."

"Well, I doan keer nuthin' tall 'bout dat, Sandy Claus say she too lit'le fur him ter fool wid yit."

Mary Van turned to Willis, "Less us fix this tree for little Leonora."

"No, I'm got to telephone to Santy Claus." He clung to the knob of the locked door.

"Well, ef yer 'bleege ter pass er wurd wid

'im, holl'r up de chimbly—he settin' up dar lis'nin' ter see ef you'se er good boy."

"No, I want to go downstairs and see my mama!" and he kicked violently against the door.

Instead of coercing him, Phyllis took her seat by the fire, and placing her elbows upon her knees, spoke with her face towards the chimney: "Suh?" pausing a moment to listen; "yas, suh—yas, suh, dat's Willis, but he ain' no bad chile,—yas, suh, dat's him kickin' 'gainst de do', but he jes' playin' foot ball wid hit—nor, suh, Willis ain' bad, he's de bes' boy in dis town."

Immediately both children were climbing into her lap asking and answering their own questions. "Lawdy mussy 'pon me! Set down like fokes—whut's dem lit'le cheers fur?" They, however, seated themselves

upon the rug, and pulled her down with them so as to be more convenient for further chimney discourse.

"Mammy, did he say he was going to bring my drum, an' billy goat wagon, an'—"

"An' my dolly with long hair that can talk, an' my—"

"He say," she interrupted quietly, "he gwine bring yer all dem things you done writ erbout, ef yer be's good chillun. De speshul news he giv' me den, is 'bout de beastes; an' creeters' Crismus tree. He say Tall Pine gwine be de Crismus tree, an' Mist'r Race Hoss gwine read out de names on de pres'nts."

"Mammy, can Mist'r Race Hoss climb up Tall Pine Tree?"

"Whut he hatt'r clime hit fur? Ain't Mist'r Wile Cat dar ter scale de tree an'

ain' Doct'r Peckerwood settin' up dar wid his doct'r sissors, jes' waitin' ter clip de strings?"

"But Mister Wild Cat might eat up Doctor Peckerwood," said Mary Van, distrustfully.

"Honey, Mist'r Wile Cat's like er heap er slick fokes in de woel—he'll wurk pow'ful good an' squar' long es he know fokes watchin' 'im. All de beastes an' creeturs come ter de tree—an' I tell yer dar wus er Crismus gif' fur all de good ones."

"Mister Rattlesnake didn't get any, did he?" asked Mary Van.

"Rattlesnake say Decemb'r too late fur him ter be settin' up, an' he say he'd ruth'r sleep dan go ter enny ole Crismus tree ennyhow."

"Tishy Peafowl was too bad, too, wasn't

she, Mammy?" Mary Van remembered the bad ones.

"You slip up right dar, yas, mam, you is, fur Tishy done got 'ligion an' jine de church."

"Did her pretty feathers grow out again?"

"No, mam! sin done eat 'em out by de roots, but de Lawd hang er mouty prutty fe'th'r coll'r on de tree fur her, jes' ter show Tish he know she tryin'."

"And Tishy never was bad any more," assisted Willis.

"Dat she wus, sin ketch'd up wid her er heap er times, but she recoleck 'bout de col'r, an' fight de bes' she kin, an' de Lawd doan ax fur no mo'."

"Was Jack Donkey too bad to come?"

"Jack Donkey wusn't no wusser'n er heap uv 'em dat gits ter Crismus trees. Jack he

writ'n an' ax Sandy ter bring him er fine kiv'r so fokes can't fine out he's er donkey. Sandy, he sen' him de kiv'r wid all sort er fine doin's on hit, but whin Cap'n Goat fling hit on Jack, dar wus his b'hime legs prancin' erbout, an' his long ye'rs still er stickin' out. Cap'n Goat, he pull an' pull ter stretch de kiv'r, but hit won't stretch, den de Cap'n tell him, 'Jack,' sez he, 'long es you keeps dem b'hime foots wurkin' like you does, an' dem long ye'rs gwine ev'y which er way, yer mout jes' es well call yo'se'f donkey, 'caze no kiv'r ain' gwine stretch big nuf ter hide dem p'ints.' "

Willis pushed her knee: "Give Cap'n Yellow Jacket and Cap'n Hornet something nice 'cause old Grab-All got all their cider, —they didn't do anything bad."

"Lawdy, boy, dem fokes done kilt one

nuth'r long ergo. Doan yer 'memb'r? But der wid'rs got ax ter come, an' dey nev'r went, 'caze Grab-All Spid'r tryin' ter dance 'tendance fus' on one, den tuth'r uv 'em."

"Don't let old Grab-All get any present."

"Lawsee, I mos' fergit ter tell yer 'bout de axdent dat hap'n ter ole Grab-All, whin he come er sneakin' up de side er Mist'r Tall Pine. Yassuh, Mist'r Wile Cat an' Doct'r Peck'rwood tryin' ter handle dat buckit er hot cowpeas an' pot licker fur Sis' Cow, whin de whole thing slip an' come down *blump*, on ole Grab-All."

"Did it kill him?"

"Nor, dorter, he too mean ter die, but dat's whut he got off'n de Crismus tree."

"Didn't Sis' Cow get some more peas?" asked Willis.

"Nor, she say her an' Brer Dur'am 'ud jes'

lick up whut dey cud off'n de groun'. Sis' Cow say she willin' ter lose de peas jes' ter see ole Grab-All git fixt. I tell yer de tree lookin' mouty fine by de time ole Crismus night come. Yer see de beastes hatt'r have der doin's on ole Crismus night."

"What's Old Christmas?"

"I donno whut 'tis, son, 'cep'n I allus heah dat twelve days atter Crismus, 'zackly at twelve erclock in de night time, all de beastes an' creeturs falls on der knees an' glorifies de Lawd,—an' I allus heahs fokes call hit 'Ole Crismus.' "

"Birds can't kneel, Mammy Phyllis," announced Mary Van.

"Dey kin put der haid on de groun', an' make der cross mark, I reckin."

"Where was Miss Queen Bee; you left her out?"

"Miss Queen lef' herse'f out, she say she feer'd her rumaticks 'ud git wusser, but dat ain' so—she feer'd sumbody gwine ketch her 'Crismus gif'.' "

"Did God fix their eyes like Johnnie Squinch's, so they could see the tree good at night?"

"Whut he got ter do dat fur, son?" Ain' you seed de candles dat grows on de een' er ev'y pine tree branch?"

"No, Mammy Phyllis, I haven't," Mary Van insisted upon an explanation.

"Shucks, gal, ain' yer seed dis hyah lit'le light green candle sorter lookin' things comin' out'n de bushy een' er de pine tree branches?"

"Are they candles?" the little girl did not quite remember.

"Whut else is dey ter light up de Lawd's

birfday party wid? I'll show yer dem candles de nex' time we goes on Tink'r Knob. I tell yer whin de Roost'r teler-fome: 'Come on ter de Crismus t-r-e-e-,' 'Come on ter de Crismus t-r-e-e-!' dey all comes er tar'in'. Ole man Roost'r, he fly up ter de highes' rock on Tink'r Knob, an' watch de clouds. Miss Moon, she bus' th'u er big Black bank uv 'em an' tetch off ev'y candle on dat tree—an' ole man Roost'r say, 'Blessed be de L-a-w-d,' an' all de beastes draps on der knees, an' says der pra'rs. Den dey gits up an' ketches one nuth'r Crismus gif', an' den dey gits der pres'nts."

"Mammy, did Ned Dog, an' Lilly Dove, an' Big Eye Buzzard get sumthin'?" Willis wanted to remember all.

"No," interrupted Mary Van, shaking her finger at Willis. "Mammy said the

bad ones couldn't come, and Big Eye was bad."

"Well, I tell yer, dey let Big Eye come an' clean up de scraps fur 'em, 'caze he done name hisse'f Buzzard ergin, an' he wus gittin' long bet'r."

"Mammy, did everyone that was good get something?"

"Not ev'y single one, baby. Hit hap'n dat Sandy Claus make some mouty bad meestakes, ev'y now an' den. Some time he give bad fokes de things de good fokes orter have. You 'memb'rs dem fire crack'rs dat lit'le yaller dog ax us ter take off'n his tail las' Crismus? Well, dat Weed boy's ole bad bull dog gits er heap mo'n him."

"Mammy, let Yellow Doggie come to Mister Tall Pine's Christmas Tree," begged Willis.

"He say he ruth'r eat Crismus dinn'r wid Ned Dog. But dar's er heap er yall'r dogs 'mongst fokes I tell yer. Dat po' white 'ooman come beggin' hyah las' week, wid dat raggity boy tryin' ter hope car'y de po' lit'le ha'f froz' baby. No, Lawd," she shook her head, "dem fokes ruth'r have er piece er corn bread, an' er han'full er fier'n all de Crismus tree yer kin stick at 'em." The mental picture of the woman was still vivid, for she continued: "I speck dat 'ooman got dat quilt yer ma give her, wrop roun' her right now, squattin' close ter some hot ashes in de fierplace, wid de baby squose up right clost ter her, an' dat boy gittin' clost es he kin ter her und'r de quilt—an' I speck he say,

" 'Ma, doan yer wush we had er stockin' ter hang up, so Sandy Claus 'ud bring us sumpin'?'

"I speck his ma hug him tight wid one arm, an' moan, an' moan, an' moan, an' I speck de boy say:

" 'Ma, yer reckin' Sandy 'ud give us er piece er bread, ef I wuster go down ter de sto' wind'r an' ax him fur hit?'

"An' I speck his ma jes' keep on er moanin', 'caze she know dat ole sto' man's Sandy Claus ain' no bett'r'n de sto' man hisse'f.

"He say, 'Ma, yer reck'n May Van an' Willis 'ud lemme look th'u de wind'r at der nice warm fier, an' all der good sump'in' ter eat, an' de purty Crismus tree?'

"An' his ma mos' bus' her heart in two, 'caze she can' do nuthin' but jes' luv 'im."

"Mammy," trembled the little girl's voice, "why didn't the little boy write to Santy like me and Willis?"

" 'Caze he nuv'r had no stamp ter put on

de let'r. I tell yer hit takes money ter buy Sandy Claus stamps."

"We just sent ours up the chimbly," refuted Willis.

"Dat boy didn't had ernuf fire ter make his'n go up de chimbly."

"Why didn't his mama ask God?" half whispered Mary Van, as she laid her head on Phyllis's shoulder.

"Dat po' creetur's moanin' an' groanin' wus er heap loud'r'n enny pra'r she cud pray."

"Couldn't God hear her?" Willis clutched her by the arm. "Ask God to lis'n good, Mammy."

"De Lawd know his biznes', baby, bet'r'n we does. Dat 'ooman got ter set dar an' shiv'r tell de Lawd git somebody ter het her up ergin."

"Mammy," said Willis, his lips quivering, "le'ss weall take 'em some of our goodies an' things."

Mary Van begged, "Please."

"Dar now!" She placed a hand on each baby head: "De Lawd done he'rd dat po' creet'rs pra'r right now. He want you chillun ter go fix dat po' 'ooman's fier, an' give her sump'n' ter eat, so you won't nuv'r fergit how good He is ter you, an' whin you kicks at de do', an' holl'ers loud, you'll 'member ter fight sin like Tishy Peafowel do."

Her suggestion went to each eager little heart.

"Yas, suh, an' de Lawd say: 'Doanchu both'r no mo', lit'le boy, er ole black mammy comin' roun' hyah terreckly wid er lit'le boy an' gal, an' dey gwina bring all der ole toys, an' some der warm close too, 'long wid

some nice vit'als, an' der pa gwine sen' yer some fier, ter make er fier wid."

There was no need to lock the nursery door on Christmas Eve afternoon, for Phyllis and two radiant little children were in the rockaway, fairly packed in under the good things they carried to some of the homes Santa didn't know about. And when the happy little boy said his, "Now I lay me" that night, he asked, "An' please tell Santy not to forget m' goat harness and m' goat, an' m' drum, an' bring Mary Van a harness like my race hoss harness with bells, an' please show Santy the way to all the lit'le poor children's houses, an' give 'em some stamps for their letters, too. An' please God tell Santy to hurry up an' come on. Amen."

XVII
AN AFTERWORD

AN AFTERWORD

Expressions of regret have reached me that "Bypaths in Dixie" does not open with a tribute in verse to old Mammy. Let me confess I share this regret. It, therefore, occurs to me that the sympathetic readers who have missed "Lines to Mammy" from my little book may be interested in the following faithful account of the author's failure to furnish this tribute to the heroine of these stories. I am, indeed, the more persuaded to offer this personal experience of authorship, because I believe it explains in no mean degree the missing poems from the pages of many women who follow Art for Art's alluring sake along various pleasant by-

ways, but who journey for the most part on the broad highway of a very practical life. Moreover, those who hold that poets are born, not made, may by the following true story be constrained to add to their creed that born poets may by some circumstances be unmade.

The poem above referred to was thought of but not until the manuscript was on the press, hence when the publisher wired "send at once" the would-be poet succumbed to a nervousness calculated to destroy rather than inspire poetic impulse. A chair from the chimney corner was drawn closer to the fire in hopes that the odor of burning logs might woo association away from radiators back to the old wood-pile, the chip basket, and the lightwood knot. Nor did this

simple ruse fail of expectation, for soon the old home took shape in the flames. I could see the heavy green shutters that tempered the summer sun in the nursery, and through these, flung wide, I could look into the high pitched room, big and square, not crowded for all the crib-beds of varying sizes, and Mammy with a child in one arm stumbling over toys to the bedside of a rebellious charge: "Bett'r shet yer eyes 'fo' ole Mist'r Grab All come an' git yer." And so the pencil moved:

> In dreams I see thee bending o'er me.
> To the old plantation home we rove,
> Where—

At this moment Aunt Ellen opened the door and waited. Seeing she was unnoticed, she began:

"You ain' tole me er Lawd's thing 'bout dinn'r er bre'kfus, er supp'r."

"Oh, Aunt Ellen, don't ask me what to have—fix anything."

In dreams I see thee bend—

"Yassum, but yer got ter have sump'thin' ter fix 'fo' yer kin fix hit."

"Mercy me," I fretfully turned, "have that roast from yesterday,—it was scarcely touched." Then again over the fire:

In dreams I see thee—

"Cose I kin heat de roas', an' put taters 'roun' hit, an'—"

"Aunt Ellen," an idea seized me, "you know that old black dress of mine you've been begging me for? Well, I'll give it to

you if you will arrange everything nicely and not ask me a thing."

In dreams I see thee bend—

"All right, honey, I'll do hit too, att'r I tells you dey ain' no flour in de house."

"That barrel of flour gone?"

"Good Lawd, Miss Sa', how long you 'speck flour ter las' an' you all eatin' like yer does?"

"Well order a sack, and I'll see about another barrel when I go down town."

In dreams—

"Now, Aunt Ellen, go on."

"Yassum, but I'm bleeg'd ter tell yer de kitchen b'iler's leakin'."

"Oh, for pity's sake!" I started for the kitchen, then remembered: "Go tell the man working on the furnace to fix it,—and re-

member, no dress for you if you keep interrupting me." Once more to the fire I turned, trying to conjure back the nursery, bedtime, Mammy, or anything. I bit my pencil and read once more:

> In dreams I see thee bending o'er me,
> To the old plantation home we rove,
> Where—

"Miss Sa', dat man say he ain' got nuthin' ter do wid kitch'n fixin's.—He say he's er furniss man. An' Tom done cut de wat'r off, an' I can't git dinn'r tell de plumb'r come."

A prolonged telephonic agony ensued with the plumber, which entirely dispelled the charm I had half invoked. On the way back to the library, I heard Tom at the front door: "Yassum, dat's her, but she's pow'ful busy ter day." The next moment

Tom's tall figure appeared at the library door, and over his shoulder peered the taller one of a woman whose masculine features were shaded by a hat of garish variety.

"I simply could not pass without recalling myself to you, and getting one more peep," exclaimed my visitor as she brushed past Tom, "into this old-fashioned library with shelves up to the ceiling."

"Will you have this seat?" I murmured, trying to recall a previous meeting.

"Oh, no, I'll just sit in this seat in the corner."

This she did, upsetting pencil and paper on the table near-by. Both of us reached over,—I to rescue my lines, she to raise her skirt, from the narrow confines of which also she drew forth a book of dimensions that I hesitate to specify.

"I have here some literature," she drew forth yards of pasteboard arranged in economic design, "that I—"

"Madam," I raised a hand in protest, "let these over-crowded shelves be my answer," my mind the while dipping again into the past where Mammy Phyllis seemed to whisper: "Bett'r look out, dat's Cap'n Yall'r Jackit's ole lady youse foolin' wid." Thus, while my visitor rehearsed the merits of "The American People in Literature and Art," and differentiated between book agents and traveling educators, I listened to Mammy telling about Cap'n Hornet and Cap'n Yall'r Jackit and Mist'r Grab-All Spider, until finally Mammy and I sat together out under the old cherry tree and watched their famous battle.

"Being a traveling educator, may I see

what books these shelves are lined with?"

"Certainly," I subconsciously assented, while the muse ran:

> Thy hand my toddling steps did guide,
> Thy soft voice crooned to gentle sleep —

no; that will not do:

> Thy wisdom oft my—'

"Why on earth did you not tell me you had the books and save me this time and effort?" burst furiously from the far end of the room, putting to blush even Cap'n Yall'r Jackit's old Lady, "But you did not know it —did not know that such books as these existed, much less in your own library."

All the while she was nervously repacking the wonderful hidden pocket.

"I bid you good morning," now perfectly attired for another social call, "and ask you

to pardon my emotion when I see such a library in the possession of a woman who does not know even the titles of her own books! I have heard of such ignorance, but never believed it until now!"

"Good-bye, Miss Yall'r Jackit," I felt, and back in the chimney corner I dropped to dream again with the publishers' wire commanding me from the mantel-piece.

> In dreams again thy hand doth guide
> Through meadow land where kine doth—

Tom so softly entered that his presence was unknown until he apologized: "De Bank Man say please ter step ter de telerfome."

"Hello! Well?"

"Did you get the notice of your overdraft yesterday?"

"Indeed I did, and I was going to see you

about it this morning and tell vou there was some mistake."

"In what way?" chillingly interrogated this voice of superior business intelligence.

"You have me overdrawn ten dollars when I know I have twenty dollars and thirty-five cents to my account."

"I am very sorry," he loftily and pityingly apologized, "but our books, according to your checks, show an overdraft."

"Well," I sighed, perfectly sure I was right and perfectly sure he would convince me I was not, "I cannot attend to it to-day. Just let it stand until I come down town. I am very busy to-day."

Oh! for an uninterrupted moment!—What so simple as lines to write, if only one has the time.

I found a stingy blaze struggling up the

chimney: "Do, Tom, run get some kindling and chips quick."

"Kin yer wait, Miss Sa', tell I gits thu settin' de table? Hit's near 'bout dinn'r time."

Alas! even as he spoke the family began to assemble, and the library quietly and naturally changed into a family gathering room, where real people crowded out the dreams in a mother's mind.

At length the meal ended, the house cleared, once more I turned to the lines. A seat was chosen by the window this time, in hopes that a view of the mountains would call up the spirits of Mist'r Bad Simmon Tree, Miss Wile Grape, de Reed gals, and their forest companions.

> Thou lessons teachest through tree and vine
> A crookèd twig's to thee a sign
> For moral lect—

In the dim perspective of the street a flying object arrested my thoughts. An instant more and it developed into one of my hopefuls tearing like mad on a four-year-old colt, without saddle or bridle. "Help! Catch him!" I cried, as I threw up the window sash. Passers-by rushed to the rescue as the colt took the hedge, crossed the lawn, and halted under the window without a quiver.

"Mama! just look at these people! Send them away—the colt is as gentle as a cat."

Echoes of Wild West, Buffalo Bill, came from the dispersing crowd, while the boy grumbled: "A bridle and saddle don't do a thing but make a 'Sissy' out of a boy."

The mountain view resigned in favor of the chimney corner, where with limbs still trembling I sank almost resigned to give up

the lines. Prose was easy enough to write, even with interruptions, but poetry, where one must dream and drift into the spirit of the thought,—this, alas, was not the calling of a busy mother of six, at least not of this busy mother.

"Miss Sa'," Tom appeared bearing a cup of hot milk, "An' Ellen say drink dis an' hit'll set yer up ergin, den whin I gits dis fier ter blazin' " (he piled the logs higher), "yer'll write dem poetries 'fo' yer knows hit."

Even as he swept the ashes from the hearth, "send at once" spurred my flagging mood to one more effort. Yes, once more I'll try! Let me see.—I rubbed my brow and tugged at the hair about my temples—Let's see—

"Miss Sa'," he sheepishly turned, "I aint

tole yer, dey telerfome fum de office comp'ny wus comin' ter supp'r—yas, mam—two gent'muns."

"Tell Aunt Ellen to order some shad to go with whatever else she has, and please, p-l-e-a-s-e do not let the King of England open that door again."

The flames licked up the chimney, the oak logs popped and crackled, and insisted they were singing the same tunes they sang in the nursery of old, when I gazed at them through the tall brass fender and listened to Mist'r Hickory Log and Mist'r Wise Oak telling Mammy all about their kinsfolk and friends. And as the wind whistled drearily around the north corners of the house, I seemed to hear Mist'r Tall Pine's lonely wail echoing the cries of "hants" and spirits in search of rest from unholy graves. In-

stinctively, I cuddled to Mammy, who took me by the hand, and led me into the summer sunlight, down the narrow honeysuckle lane, where Miss Queen Bee and Cap'n Hornit and Cap'n Yall'r Jackit droned lazily among the heavy blossoms, keeping rhythm to the low hum of Mammy's voice. Then, somehow, the pencil began of its own accord to move across the paper.

TO MAMMY

Thy beaming face woos me afresh to-night,
My eyelids droop, for with thy plaintive song
Old times drift back and tender memories throng
With fable-tales. I fondly crave the sight
Of wood and lane and towering mountain height,
With thee as guide. I hear once more among
The distant hills thy thrilling voice prolong
The lore of beasts, of birds, and glowworm's light.
Their secrets now are locked from anxious man,
And none, since mute thy tongue must ever be,
Can link our child-days with their mystery:

For thou hast passed beyond the mountain span
With faith unfaltering in thy Maker's plan,
And left to us thy vibrant memory.

—and Mammy led me past honeysuckle lane, through field and grove to pastureland, where old Sis Nanny Goat lies in a corner of the fence moaning and groaning:

Sis Wile Lucy Goose fly down an' ax:

"Whut ail yo' haid, Sis Nanny Goat?"

Sis Nanny Goat 'spon,' she do: "I bin tryin' ter git out'n dis heah ole pastur', ov'r yond'r in Mist'r Man's ole lady's flower gyard'n," sez she, "but dat ole wall so hard I done wase m'time, an' I ain' got nuthin' ter show fur hit but dese heah bumps on m'haid."

Sis Wile Lucy Goose say, sez she: "Law, Sis Nann Goat, ain' you got no mo' sense dan ter try ter projick wid Mist'r Man's

doin's? All yer got ter do is ter flop yer wings an' give er hop, an' dar yer is, ov'r de fence mongst de flow'rs."

"But I ain' got no wings ter flop wid," spon Sis Nanny Goat.

"Dar now," sez Sis Wile Lucy Goose, "den you got ter keep on eatin' dis same ole grass tell you sprouts somethin' nuther ter fly wid."

I reached out for a firmer clasp on Mammy's hand, now slipping from me, when kindly sleep, with its visions, forsook me and left me only the picture of the impotent bumps on Sis Nanny Goat's head. But I seemed to catch the faint echo of Mammy's voice saying: "Hit taint time you orter be cryin' fer, hit's sense."

THE END

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